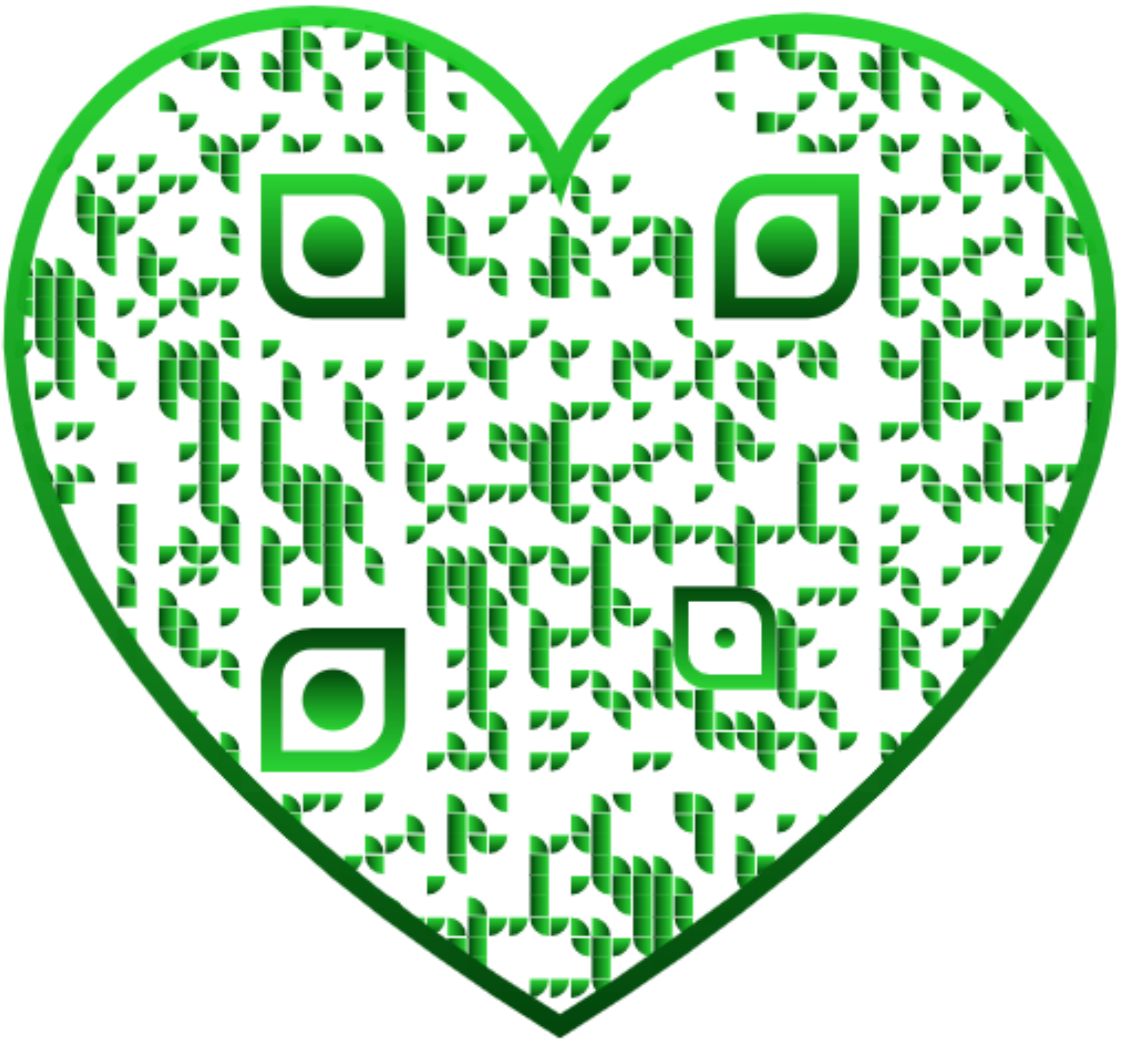
Power Places and the Master Builders of Antiquity

UNEXPLAINED MYSTERIES OF THE PAST

Frank Joseph



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Frank Joseph

Bear & Company
Rochester, Vermont

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Foreword

I have known author Frank Joseph for a quarter century, dating back to his first book about sacred sites and power places. What people might not realize at first is how Frank personally explores and studies the places he writes about.

I happened to work at the publishing house that released Frank's first book and it was a personal joy and privilege for me to promote the book. I remember how Frank and I worked out a slide show for the national bookfair held that year at the Anaheim Convention Center in California. We rented a private room for Frank's slides of sacred sites and power places and pretty much packed the room. Frank narrated the picture show, something he continues to do today with much relish (although he's now updated his photo presentation to Power Point pictures from his laptop). Frank always speaks with great enthusiasm and knowledge about the places he has explored and studied as a journalist. He climbs hillsides, jumps into boats, and dons a diving suit to get a first-person perspective wherever possible.

Well, I always wanted Frank to write a big sequel to his first book on power places; somehow I believe Frank always did, too. Nonetheless, he moved along successfully as a writer with something like three dozen other books, all on parallel subjects. He has written about synchronicity, early American civilizations, runes, dolphins, and many other ancient mysteries around the world. All of these other books, of course, are fascinating and eye-opening, as he explores the mysteries of both the modern and ancient world.

Meanwhile, Frank's pent-up appetite for studies of power places and sacred sites of the Earth led to many magazine articles. Frank worked for a while at *FATE* magazine in marketing and as a writer and also served as an editor in chief at *Ancient American* magazine.

I am very familiar with *FATE* magazine. It was for several years a part of the same publishing house where I once worked on Frank's first book. To some small degree while there, I helped build the distribution of the magazine and managed the advertising department for *FATE*. It was at this publishing house where I also met the editor of the magazine, Phyllis Galde. She subsequently purchased the magazine and moved it down the road to her place.

Frank followed Phyllis to serve awhile on staff and also to write for *FATE*, contributing many articles. Many of his best articles from this long-revered magazine are now collected here in this wonderfully illustrated book.

There is something for everyone in this colorful collection. Are you interested in pyramids, UFOs, the Templars, Atlantis, the Bermuda Triangle, or the Ark of the Covenant? Then read this book. How about communicating with the dead or elemental beings? Read on.

One thing you can always be certain about when you read a Frank Joseph book. He puts his entire heart and soul into exploring and describing the ancient mysteries of our world. And he includes a lot of wonderful illustrations to bring it all home for you. What could be more interesting?

VON BRASCHLER

VON BRASCHLER, a former faculty member at Omega Institute for Holistic Studies, has led workshops through the United States and the United Kingdom in the areas of consciousness development, time, chakra healing, pet healing, and dream work. He is a trained massage therapist, pet therapist, energy healer, and Kirlian photographer. A lifetime member of the Theosophical Society, he is the author of several books, including *Seven Secrets of Time Travel* and *Confessions of a Reluctant Ghost Hunter*. Previously, Braschler worked at Llewellyn Publications, an independent publisher of books for body, mind, and spirit. He is a frequent magazine, television, and radio contributor.

INTRODUCTION

Strange, but True

In an earlier century, as a twelve-year-old student, I was sternly warned by Dominican nuns at St. Joseph Catholic Grammar School in Homewood, Illinois, to avoid a neighborhood drugstore, where copies of the demonic monthly *FATE* magazine lured Christian souls into Satan's clutches. It would have horrified me at the time to know that someday, in an inconceivably distant future, my words would appear in the Devil's own journal. True, *FATE* has played fair with "pagan" and non-Christian concepts. But, because its writers and readers are nondenominationally interested in every manifestation of the otherworldly, extraordinary places like Father Dobberstein's Grotto of the Redemption and Bosnia's Virgin Mary apparitions at Medugorje are also favorably reviewed in *FATE.*

I've been working for the magazine since 1989, beginning with the "Visionary of Atlantis," included in this anthology of my *FATE* articles. Writing them has been a life-changing experience, because they opened up whole vistas of existence I knew little or nothing about, until forced to investigate. There was the incredible responsiveness of water to human interaction, both ancient and contemporary sacred sites across America and around the world, prehistoric pyramids in China, a lost city in the Pacific Ocean, the Bermuda Triangle, modern-day prophets, nature spirits, snake handlers, reincarnation, communicating with the dead, psychic viewing of the Great Sphinx with our readers—the variety and scope of these alternative realities was not only mind-altering, but also conscience-expanding.

FATE magazine has been in continual publication since 1948. As such, it is America's longest-running periodical devoted to expert opinions and personal experiences about every conceivable paranormal and metaphysical topic. "No product, especially a magazine, can stay around for so many years unless it meets a need,"[1] noted Carl Llewellyn Weschcke, who acquired *FATE* forty years later from its founders. The magazine's premier article was by a Minnesota-born aviator and businessman, describing his encounter with flying saucers near

Mount Rainier, Washington. Kenneth Arnold's sighting is generally considered the first observation of its kind, triggering a popular interest in unidentified flying objects that continues to the present day. The report also propelled *FATE* magazine to national prominence overnight with its first issue, attracting more than 100,000 subscribers over the next seven years, with hundreds of thousands of additional rack sales in book stores, coffee shops, and a variety of public venues across the United States.

While our interest in reading magazines has faded, our curiosity about topics explored in *FATE* has not. In 2001, the magazine passed to its editor in chief, Phyllis Galde. She steered it through the economic typhoons of 2008 that sank many other and far larger publications. A report from the Brookings Institution five years later revealed that the number of newspapers per million people fell from more than eighteen hundred to less than four hundred. Going on seventy years of smooth sailing and rough waters, *FATE* is still afloat, thanks as much to tireless Phyllis as to her loyal readers, who continue to renew the lifelong treasures of intellectual and spiritual enrichment and enlightenment through the broad diversity of alternative thought offered for consideration. They have come to appreciate that the world is not entirely what consensus reality insists, as demonstrated by the mostly unconventional, occasionally suppressed or neglected, sometimes heretical information and conclusions presented in the following pages.

SECTION I

Master Builders of Antiquity

1

Old World Connections with New World Sacred Centers

“An author writes about the country he knows,” observed Ernest Hemingway. “And the country he knows is in his heart.”[1] Such a country transcends arbitrary map boundaries and political borders by which nations identify themselves. The places in question exist on every continent. They are the chakras of Mother Earth—points of focused, spiritual energies welling up from the bowels of the planet, or instilled in the site by concentrated human will. They are great energy sources from which we can replenish and empower ourselves, if only we knew their secrets.

So much has already been written about sacred sites overseas that Americans are left with the impression that their own country has few if any of its own and, in any case, that its sites are far less significant or impressive than foreign locations. They imagine that only a European countryside featuring a Stone Age megalith, or an antediluvian pyramid standing in the Egyptian desert are mystically endowed. While some prehistoric monuments may qualify as sacred sites, more recent, even modern structures may be no less charged with supernal energies. Their power emanates from placement within a particular Earth field, or derives from some special human impact they received.

Other spiritualized centers owe nothing of their greatness to external influences, because they are the pure outpouring of Nature’s soul. To disabuse readers of the impression that America is devoid of such locations, they are included in our description of European sacred sites—foremost among them, Britain’s Stonehenge. Today, visitors are kept beyond arms’ length by an encircling cordon of staked ropes and an elaborate security system.

These were installed after some of the megaliths were badly damaged in the early 1990s by persons spray-painting the porous stones. Modern vandals were preceded by the Romans nearly two thousand years ago. They partially tore

down the original circle of standing megaliths because native Druids were using the location as a base for Keltic resistance. First-century Druids were not the builders, but were merely following a tradition begun long before them in Neolithic times.

The masterminds who designed and set up this sophisticated astronomical computer around 3000 B.C.E. are lost to history. But the resonant power they established continues to attract visitors from around the world. Older than Stonehenge and no less potent is Ireland's Newgrange, the oldest intact building on Earth, predating the Egyptian pyramids by at least six centuries.

An hour's drive north of Dublin, Newgrange sits on top of a high hill overlooking the Boyne Valley. Built 5,200 years ago, it is a huge mound of earth covering a large, stone-lined chamber connected to the exterior by a narrow corridor. The entrance to the structure is a face with five hundred tons of white quartz and flanked by imposing monoliths emblazoned with spiral and lozenge designs. Once a year, during sunrise of the winter solstice, a shaft of golden light snakes along the floor of the corridor to illuminate a triple spiral on the far rear wall of the chamber. This annual occurrence exemplifies the Neolithic builders' belief that the human soul is linked eternally to cycles of birth, death, and rebirth, as paralleled by the yearly highlighted triple spiral. The number three is traditionally associated with eternity, while the spiral is a universal symbol of soul, mimicking its perpetual evolution.

Off the south coast of Scotland, among the Hebrides, is one of the strangest islands on Earth. Resembling some impossibly man-made mausoleum, Staffa is the result of a cataclysmic volcanic outburst that took place millions of years ago. Magma boiled to the surface and was frozen by sub-zero temperatures into great blocks of hardened lava. Its greatest feature is an immense cavern known as Fingal's Cave, which resembles a cathedral for Titans. Everywhere, huge square columns of basalt arch high overhead toward a monumental dome. When the tide surges into this massive interior space and hurtles itself against a wall at the far end, the resultant crash is deafening. Nothing and no one lives on barren Staffa, although visitors can reach its shores if the seas allow. Far more than a geologic curiosity, the island and its cavern have attracted religious worshippers for fifty centuries, from Stone Age sailors to Viking raiders who gave Staffa its name (literally, "staves," a reference to the columnar basalt), to modern pilgrims who sense the powerful accumulation of Earth and sea energies here.

Figure 1.1. Fingal's Cave on the Hebrides island of Staffa, photographed around 1900

On the European continent, Medugorje is a small town in the Croatian countryside famous for reported apparitions of the Blessed Virgin, beginning in the mid-1980s. These appearances are supposed to take place on a rock-strewn hill, its barren summit scorched black with the ashes of thousands of votive candles and littered with crucifixes. It still drew visitors from around the world, despite a murderous war that raged around the place the divine Queen of Peace chose for her modern manifestation. Catholics and non-Catholics alike tell of the strange appearance of the sun when viewed from atop the Hill of Apparitions. More commonly, pilgrims experience a powerful spiritual presence in its vicinity. In any case, Medugorje is a developing sacred site Christians and followers of the Blessed Virgin find inspiring.

One of the world's most overlooked centers of its kind lies on the northwest coast of Turkey. Here, more than three thousand years ago, the foremost city of the late Bronze Age encompassed palaces and temples unmatched for their

splendor within a concentric series of immense walls. The crown of thirteenth-century B.C.E. civilization, Ilios was the legendary capital of Troy, lost after the fall of classical times, until a self-styled German archaeologist, Heinrich Schliemann, brought it back into the light. While the war that consumed the city around 1240 B.C.E. irrevocably imprinted the very stonework with energies of profound human drama, Ilios was a sacred center long before its fiery destruction. It was the seat of Apollo, the sun god, the patron of creativity and beauty.

Visitors to the archaeological zone are surprised to find the environs little changed from Homer's description in the *Iliad*. From the Trojan battlements, one can still see the unobstructed plain where the great conflict was fought, and beyond to the seashore, long ago crowded with a thousand ships of the Greek invasion fleet. Instances of clairaudience are known to occur at Ilios, together with other paranormal phenomena largely associated with past-life experiences. A focal point for these is located at the open-air theater, which is preserved in good condition. Here, the receptive visitor will find an opportunity for meditation.

Across the Aegean Sea on the south coast of Greece, the columns of Delphi still stand high up the slope of Mt. Parnassus, on the Gulf of Corinth. Where today's tourists gather year-round, in ancient times initiates into the mysteries of Apollo and Poseidon followed threads of destiny to the Pythia, a priestess who spoke of the future while in an altered state of consciousness. Delphi was the leading sacred site of the entire Classical World, and its attraction to people in our time proves it has not lost its deep, spiritual resonance. It was preceded in significance by Delos, a small island in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, birthplace of divine twins associated, respectively, with lunar and solar—feminine and masculine energies: Artemis and Apollo. Most temples on Delos were built in their honor.

The island's high ground is Mt. Cynthos, with a shrine to sky father Zeus at its summit. Some one hundred feet below, facing west, is the very ancient and megalithic Temple of Apollo, raised on the site of the god's birth. It was from here that he took the *omphalos*, the Navel Stone of power and prophecy, to Delphi. Delos shares the Aegean with Crete, where the groves of Knossos still flourish as they did when Minoan kings held sway over this part of the world nearly forty centuries ago. The colorful ruins of sacred architecture, including the bull-leaping arena, are all that stand of that splendid epoch.

Southward across the Mediterranean, Egypt is most famous for her Great Pyramid, but to walk down the monumental Avenue of Sphinxes toward the

colossal pylons of Karnak in the Upper Nile Valley is to achieve a personal highlight in one's life. Here is the best preserved of Pharaonic civilization, a living house of grandeur inscribed with thousands of hieroglyphic texts and occupied by colossal representations of the gods and goddesses. Yet, for all its outsized stonework, visitors often speak of a lightness and buoyancy of spirit at Karnak.

On the other side of the world, Uxmal (pronounced "Ooshmahl") is an atmospheric ceremonial center set like a crystal in Mexico by its Maya builders more than a thousand years ago. Its Pyramid of the Magician is shaped like a gargantuan egg. A serpent writhes in stone on its walls, disgorging an egg from its jaws. Visitors stroll from the unusual pyramid to the Governor's Palace, gleaming like bleached bones in the Yucatán sun, its lofty, corbelled arches gracefully pointing toward the cobalt blue heavens. Behind it is the ceremonial ball court, where a ritual game imitated the daily struggle of the sun to cross the sky. A small, elaborately carved stone seat still stands alone before the Governor's Palace. To sit on that prehistoric throne with the measureless jungle at one's back is to conjure images of empires and spiritual powers sleeping among the silent ruins.

Far away to the north, in the Ohio Valley, Mound City consists of twenty-three prehistoric but skillfully constructed earthworks on thirteen acres, surrounded by a squarish embankment. This ancient site near the Scioto River is a necropolis, a city of the dead, but not only a cemetery. The departed here are part of a sacred ceremonial center, where this life and the next converge. Mound City's precisely constructed pyramids contain the cremated remains of several hundred persons from a lost civilization that flourished from the first to fifth centuries C.E. Archaeologists label that period of North American prehistory "Hopewell," after the farmer on whose adjacent property a turn-of-the-century excavation was made. They do not, however, know how this otherwise nameless, ancient people actually referred to themselves.

The Hopewell lived in numerous villages along the river valleys and were skilled in working stone, especially into the likenesses of birds, reptiles, and human heads. They operated a vast commercial trading network, importing copper from the Upper Great Lakes region, obsidian from what is today Yellowstone National Park, shark teeth from Chesapeake Bay, mica from the Smoky Mountains, seashells from the Gulf of Mexico, and silver from Ontario. These far-flung imports were not only used as luxury items, but also for ritual purposes. The archaeological zone known as Mound City was the shaman's special arena, where all the high magic of a spiritualized community was

dramatized.

A holy man selected the location for the precinct by a geomancy, or ritual interpretation of the landscape, and directed the creation of the mounds according to the telluric forces in evidence at the site. The structures were methodically created to contain the dead, to memorialize them and, most importantly, to continue serving the descendants for generations thereafter as spiritual powerhouses for the soul’s growth. At the center of a typical mound, the Hopewell raised a circular clay platform, upon which the cremated remains of a socially prominent person were laid, together with pottery shards, stone and copper tools, broken spear points of obsidian, flint, or garnet, and pebbles. Researchers from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., scientifically investigated Mound City for the first time in 1848, but the site was requisitioned by the U.S. Army as a training camp during World War One, and many of the ceremonial structures were destroyed.

Figure 1.2. Mound City

The ancient necropolis was finally rescued from total oblivion when it was declared a national monument in 1923. Since then, restoration has been proceeding under the auspices of the Ohio State Historical Society. The excavators retrieved artifacts from the earthworks as strange as they are beautiful. Some of the structures contained the bones of an extinct mastodon, a

creature that vanished from the American plains about ten thousand years ago. The Hopewell may have preserved shamanic paraphernalia of the last ice age. A Mound of pipes enfolded two hundred stone bowls exquisitely carved to represent animals and men.

The most visually attractive of the earthworks has been cut open to reveal the splendid entombment of four men who were laid out on a floor entirely covered with oversized flakes of jewel-like mica. Imported from as far away as Georgia for mortuary reasons, the glittering, pastel wafers were joined by elk and bear teeth, metal ornaments, large obsidian points, a cache of five thousand polished mother-of-pearl beads, and toad and raven effigy pipes. Copper armor was also found, including two helmets or headdresses, one with three pairs of copper antlers, the other in the likeness of a bear with hinged ears and legs attached by tiny rivets. The workmanship was of a high quality. This grave signifies a vast technological difference between the ancient Hopewell and the historic Shawnee who occupied the region at the time of early European settlement.

The Shawnee knew nothing of Mound City, made no claims to it, and did not have the large-scale social organization that went into constructing the earthworks. Some fundamental connections with ancient Egypt appear in the site's square embankment, which shares precisely the same area—13.6 acres—with the base of the Nile Delta's Great Pyramid. Moreover, the twenty-three burial earthworks at Ohio's prehistoric necropolis find their counterparts in the same, original number of tombs at the Giza Plateau. Ephraim George Squier (1821–1888) and Edwin Hamilton Davis (1811–1888), surveyors who first mapped the area in 1845, concluded that the Mound City structures were built by immigrants from Yucatán, perhaps Maya culture bearers interested in Ohio Valley traded goods. Since Squier and Davis arrived at their nineteenth-century supposition, material evidence supporting a Mesoamerican connection has come to light in the form of an excavated Hopewell necklace made of parakeet bills. Also recovered from a Mound City earthwork was a copper ornament fashioned to represent a parrot. Neither bird is native to the Ohio Valley.

Moreover, Hopewell hunters and warriors were armed with the same kind of throwing stick used in the Valley of Mexico. Circumstances surrounding the sudden disappearance of Mound City's residents also suggests Mesoamerican influence. The Maya regulated their society by a sacred calendar, the largest division of which was the so-called Long Count, a four-hundred-year period opened and closed by massive, fundamental changes, including large-scale migrations. The history of Hopewell occupation at Mound City covered a four-

century time span that may have started with Maya immigration to the Ohio Valley, two thousand years ago.

According to the same ceremonial calendar, the site was abandoned after four hundred years, its inhabitants returning to Yucatán. Whatever their origins or fate, they left behind an impressive, magical memorial to their vanished greatness. The number and arrangement of the mounds form a ritual pattern, the meaning of which has been lost. It is therefore impossible to identically reconstruct the Hopewell ceremonies that took place in Mound City. The squarish earthwork perimeter with rounded corners resembles the outline of a house, with gaps where doors should be at the north and south ends. In Native American tradition, north is the Spirit Direction; south, the Direction of Becoming.

Perhaps ritual enactments began when initiates entered through the northern portal of death, participated in shamanic ceremonies among the mortuary mounds, then departed through the southern exit of rebirth. Such an interpretation is suggested by the close proximity of the Scioto to the northern gap. Along the opposite banks, the live-in village of a Hopewell town was located. Crossing a river is a universal human archetype for death. Hence, traveling over the Scioto from their homes to the necropolis might have had the same significance as fording the River Styx did for ancient Greeks. Leaving Mound City through the southern Direction of Becoming implies that the rituals that took place within the sacred precinct dealt with death and transfiguration.

The existence of a reincarnation or rebirth cult at work here has been underscored by some of the physical evidence excavated over the past one hundred years. The Death Mask Mound, largest of the site’s earthworks, contained fragments of a human skull that had been sawed and drilled for use as a mask, probably worn by a master of ceremonies more than sixteen centuries ago. The same mound was also a burial site for thirteen adult males accompanied by effigies shaped to resemble falcons or parrots wrought in copper. The bird is another universal symbol for the human soul, and copper is associated with the sun and immortality.

Of the hundreds of expertly carved stone pipes recovered from Mound City, most depict animals that clearly signify death and rebirth, such as the raven, serpent, and bear. Those carved into human heads may be portraits of the deceased; at least some of them were probably shamans. Tobacco was and is revered as the holiest herb. The mildly altered state of consciousness it produces was considered intimately connected with the spirit world. The pipes were not smoked for pleasure alone, but for purposes of communication with entities on

the Other Side. Indeed, Mound City is a simulacrum of that parallel existence. Archaeologists believe it was valued as a visible representation of the Hopewell heaven for leading families of the power elite. While this speculation seems plausible, the overall implication of the site suggests it was far more than a political cemetery for the privileged dead. Rather, they were part of the spiritual empowerment generated within the sacred center by the entire community.

Eight hundred miles west, in the state of Kansas, stories of a splendid, ancient civilization with a mystical center at its heart may seem too farfetched for belief. But the first white men to hear those tales were Spanish conquistadors, who overthrew the Aztec Empire during the early sixteenth century. In the insatiable quest for gold, they were informed by subjected Mexicans about Quivira, the Seven Cities of Cibola, allegedly an old, powerful state of magnificent temples and high magic, where the gold of the sun god was allegedly preserved. Only a few aged advisors of Emperor Moctezuma III supposedly knew of Cibola-Quivira's whereabouts, and shared their knowledge with some younger followers of the rapidly declining Aztec religion. They acted as guides for the greedy Spaniards, who mounted an expedition in search of the legendary Seven Cities of Gold under the command of Francisco Vazquez de Coronado in 1541.

Along the way, he was encouraged by various tribal and pueblo peoples who had heard at least something of Cibola, and urged the foreigners ever northward. Finally, Coronado and his forty men reached what is now central Kansas. The Aztec guides had followed their instructions faithfully, and the landscape matched descriptions provided by their elders back in Mexico. But not one of the Seven Cities of Gold was to be found. Not even their ruins. All that the Spaniards saw were scattered, underpopulated villages of grass huts inhabited by hunter-gatherers. Coronado's disappointment was keenly felt.

"I arrived at the province they call Quivira, to which the guides were conducting me, and where they had described to me houses of stone with many stories, and not only are they not of stone, but of straw, but the people in them are as barbarous as all those whom I have ever seen and passed before this."[2]

Over the next 430 years, the lost Seven Cities of Gold were consigned to legend. But in the 1960s, Waldo R. Wedel of the Smithsonian Institution excavated the first of five unusual structures in Rice and McPherson Counties, in not only central Kansas, but the precise center of the North American continent. Referred to as "council circles," the ruins are circular mounds sixty to ninety feet wide, averaging about three feet high.[3] They are surrounded by shallow ditches

and show evidence of intense burning covered over by numerous sandstone boulders. Pits contained the bones of children and adult skulls. The local Wichita Indians knew nothing of the council circles, but after a more than four-century lapse, stories of Cibola began to circulate again.

Nothing conclusive about the excavations was obtained until 1982, when archaeologist R. Clark Mallam identified a startling feature nearby. It was the image of a gigantic snake cut into the ground like a reverse image, or intaglio. From its gaping jaws emerged a huge, oval shape. Subsequent tests of the 160-foot-long effigy revealed that it was oriented not only to the three Rice County council circles, but more significantly, to the winter and summer solstices. The fires that long ago burned in the pitted mounds were lit when the sun's position was opposite the tail of the snake. Solar alignments of the serpent intaglio and council circles suggest that the lost Cibola-Quivira does indeed lie below the plains of central Kansas.

The "gold" of which the Aztecs spoke, however, may not have anything to do with the metal sought by Coronado. Rather, the gold of this vanished culture was far more precious: sunlight. Such an interpretation is supported by the Aztec description of the Seven Cities of Gold. Seven separate and distinct "cities" may have never existed in prehistoric Kansas. Instead, "seven" might be understood as a sacred number defining the essential, esoteric principles of Cibola. The number seven signified the completion of cycles for many cultures around the ancient world and was associated with the movement of the sun, together with serpent symbolism, which describes the Rice County effigy and its solar orientation.

The real mystery is: Who were the sophisticated astronomer-engineers that created the serpent intaglio and its council circles in the middle of Kansas, three thousand or more years ago? Why did they choose such a remote site, hundreds of miles from the nearest civilization, to fashion their solar observatory? The mystery is made all the more curious when we learn that there are only two other snake images of this kind anywhere. One is the Great Serpent Mound, a 1,200-foot-long earthworks atop a hill in Adams County, southern Ohio, and a 110-foot-long snake disgorging an egg-shaped cairn from its mouth, likewise on a hilltop, near Loch Nell, in western Scotland.

Both the Ohio and the Scottish effigies share a common construction date, circa 1200 B.C.E. This is the same date archaeo-astronomers assign to the near miss of a comet that bombarded the Earth with a barrage of meteoric material sufficient to cause the collapse of late Bronze Age civilizations across Europe, Asia Minor, and the Near and Middle East, even as far as Shang-dynasty China.

Could the American and Scottish snake mounds spitting out an egg shape have been originally designed to represent a sky serpent, or comet, disgorging an asteroid or large meteor? If so, the survivors of some European culture may have sought refuge in both the northern British Isles and North America, where they constructed uniquely identical earth effigies as memorials to the cataclysm.

While these are the only geoglyphs of their kind, the concept they express was familiar to dynastic Egyptians, preclassical and classical Greeks, and the Maya, where the serpent-and-egg theme appears in stone relief on the flanks of Uxmal's Pyramid of the Magician, itself an egg-shaped structure, in the Yucatán jungle. The snake-egg image was regarded everywhere as the symbol of healing, regeneration, and rebirth, attributes connected with the sun. The Kansas intaglio's relationship to the council circles may extend to the local environment, comprising an organic whole. As Mallam noticed during a flyover of the site, "the council circles, demarcated by dark-green patches, seemed to be located virtually in the center of this network. It was as if we were seeing an architectural order."[4]

The intaglio's resemblance to Ohio's Great Serpent Mound is even closer than its common design suggests. The Adams County earthwork, like its Kansas counterpart, is aligned to the solstices. Clearly, these two effigies were created by the same landscape engineers, whoever they may have been. And what does its resemblance to identical European and Mayan egg-disgorging snakes imply? Is the Rice County site the remains of a transatlantic visit during the remote past? Remarkably, its memory lived on in the traditions of the Aztecs long after they ceased to have any physical contact with the place they called Cibola.

Mallam was obviously enthusiastic about the strange site: "I believe that in this cosmological conviction the serpent intaglio functioned as a 'life metaphor.' It signified and expressed through its placement and orientation the natural and cyclical processes of death, rebirth, and the regenerative power of life. Inherent in this theme are certain basic Native American concepts. Cross-culturally, the serpent represents primal chaos, disruption, disharmony and dissolution, and continual life renewal through annual shedding of its skin and hibernation. The theme of cyclical order and centrality became visibly evident at least twice each year as *hierophanies*—physical manifestations of something sacred. During the solstices, the sacredness of the headwaters defined, reaffirmed, and intensified the arrangement of cultural symbols: Cosmos emerges from chaos, summer out of winter, and life from death."[5] Astronomically related to the Rice County serpent, though seven hundred miles away, a lonely boulder stands atop a hill overlooking thousands of commuters daily speeding by on the expressway

below, to and from the city of Chicago, about two hours' drive east. This part of northern Illinois is flat farmland, so the appearance of even the fifty-foot-high hill crowned with its solitary stone seems outstanding. Across from the hill is an adjacent hill, flatter, but of almost equal height, and in fact, both are referred together as "Indian Hills." The stone in question rests at the highest point, the apex, of the more pyramidal hill to the north. Despite its "Indian" attribution, Sauk tribes that inhabited the area until the mid-nineteenth century did not haul up the two-ton burden to its lofty position. They did, however, venerate it as a Manitou, or holy object, left behind by "shamans of the Moon," who set up the hilltop altar in thanks for their survival from the Great Flood.[6] Before moving on to the north, the shamans suffused the precinct with their potent energies.

The stone is probably a glacial remnant from the last ice age, but investigators believe at least some of it was worked to shape its pointy top. Centuries of continuous weathering have effaced all traces of human modification, however. Getting the massy monolith moved up the hill's steeply inclined slope self-evidently merited a major collective endeavor. Given the presumed technological limitations of pre-Columbian man, we can only speculate how it was achieved. It is the same dilemma we face when confronted by the creation of the sacred site with which this article began: Britain's Stonehenge. Nor does our comparison with the more famous site on the Salisbury Plain end there. In the Arthurian tradition of Stonehenge, Merlin the magician supposedly levitated the ponderous monoliths through the air and set them up in perfectly concentric circles.

A surviving legend among the Sauk recounts that the ancient shamans, through the power of their magic, floated the Indian Hills' Stone from its original location at the bottom of a river, and set it gently down to face and pay homage to the moon goddess at the summit of the hill where today it perches. And as the lunar alignments of Stonehenge are generally recognized today, so the Illinois monolith is oriented to the most northerly rising of the moon. The orientation is still observable from the nearby hill across the expressway. Judging from the precise position and the not insubstantial physical labor that went into erecting it, the Indian Hills' Stone apparently meant a great deal to whoever set it up.

While any connection between a Midwestern monolith and Britain's Stonehenge may seem farfetched to conventional archaeologists, Sauk traditions of moon-worshipping shamans and ancient European myths of a prehistoric, worldwide civilization should at least give us pause for reflection. Once each year, the moon still seems to rise from out of the Indian Hills' Stone itself, then

balance for a minute or less at its pointy apex before resuming its journey across the night sky. At such an effective moment the monolith—intensely black because backlit and suffused by a temporary lunar radiance—does indeed resemble an altar to the Moon, as told by the Sauk.

The alignment must have been particularly important to prehistoric Americans, as suggested by the same orientation anciently observed 350 miles away in central Ohio at the sprawling Newark mound group at least two thousand years ago. The reappearance of the moon at its most northerly point undoubtedly heralded an annual, universal beginning of some kind related to the resurgence of feminine power. Lunar energies are especially associated with psychic phenomena—dreams, visions, telepathy, healing, clairvoyance, clairaudience—all elements that belong to the shamanic experience recalled by native Sauk.

When the moon rises to its most northerly point, it exerts its strongest tidal or gravitational pull on our planet and assumes its largest, brightest appearance in the night sky. While the latter visual manifestation generates a dramatic special effect each year at the Indian Hills' Stone, lunar influence on human behavior at that time reaches its optimum potency. Clearly, all this was understood and applied in forgotten ways by the stone's astronomer-shamans. They eventually migrated somewhere farther north, the Sauk remembered, perhaps to build Aztalan, a thirteenth-century C.E. celestial observatory on the banks of Wisconsin's Crawfish River, about one hundred miles to the north. Like the Indian Hills' Stone, Aztalan features a massive, roughly carved monolith originally aligned with the peak of nearby Christmas Hill in alignment with sunrise of the winter solstice.

These fragments of the deep past are all the pieces left to us from the grand mosaic of American prehistory. But if its builders and worshippers have long since vanished into time, the energies with which they imbued their creations resonate still in sacred sites across our continent and around the globe.

2

Ancient American Cities of the Sun

The most spectacular of all the ancient human-engineered sacred centers in North America lies just across the Mississippi River from the modern city of St. Louis. An earthen step pyramid rises in four gigantic terraces above the southern Illinois plain. Comprising 22 million cubic feet of soil, its base in excess of fourteen acres is larger than that of Egypt's Great Pyramid. Exceeded only by the Mexican pyramids at Teotihuacán and Cholula, it is the largest prehistoric structure north of the Rio Grande. Known as Monks Mound after the French Trappist monks who briefly occupied it in the early nineteenth century, the Illinois pyramid is so huge its flat top easily accommodated over four thousand persons during a Harmonic Convergence meeting in 1987.

During its hey-day nine hundred years earlier, the turf-covered colossus may have been entirely encased in clay decorated with fabulous geometric designs painted blue, red, and yellow. More certainly, a great, steeply gabled wooden temple then occupied the summit. The building was 48 feet wide and 105 feet long, bringing the original height of the pyramid to over 150 feet. From its lofty vantage point, the chief priest or regent would have looked out over a 224-acre ceremonial city completely surrounded by a twelve-foot-high wall more than two miles long. More than eighty thousand logs arranged in a stockade with regularly spaced watchtowers were plastered with a white limestone cement. The entire metropolitan area covered nearly six square miles over a 2,200-acre tract.

Figure 2.1. Artist's re-creation of Monks Mound near Collinsville, Illinois

Behind the walls south of Monks Mound spread an open-air plaza where sporting events alternated with religious ceremonies and market activities. Beyond the plaza shimmered an artificial lake reflecting a trio of large pyramidal structures, a conical mound, and a platform mound, which contained the body of a forty-five-year-old man laid out on a grave of silver mica flecks imported from the Carolinas. Surrounding him were over twenty thousand polished marine shell disc beads from the Gulf Coast and three hundred sacrificed young girls. More than 120 mounds of various shapes and sizes adorned the area, though only sixty-eight still survive. More than fifty million cubic feet of earth went into

their construction.

To the west, the observer atop Monks Mound would have been able to see a twenty-foot-high circle of cedar posts painted bright red and arranged in an astronomical position 410 feet in diameter. Known today as Woodhenge, it was an observatory to chart significant celestial events, such as the winter solstice sunrise aligned with the first platform level of the big pyramid itself. Woodhenge also computed the positions of the Pleiades and other constellations of religious and agricultural importance.

An estimated twenty thousand people resided within and beyond the walls of Cahokia, although no one knows the real name of the great city. Investigators do know, however, that it did not evolve slowly over the years, but was built suddenly, almost as though transported from some previous location, around 2500 B.C.E., just when Egypt's Great Pyramid was built. After 900 C.E., it was the dominant capital of the Mississippian culture. Then, about 1100 C.E., internal violence of some kind occurred, part of the wall was burned, the leaders fled, and Cahokia society rapidly deteriorated. By the time Monks Mound was seen by the first white explorers in the late seventeenth century, it was overgrown and long abandoned.

Who the great civilizers of southern Illinois may have been, where they came from, and what became of them are questions archaeologists cannot yet answer with material evidence. Links with Mesoamerica, however, seem obvious; connections made all the more suspicious by Cahokia's own foundation date in the early tenth century, the same period in which the Maya were evacuating their pyramidal cities in Yucatán.

Archaeologists speculatively call ancient Cahokia the City of the Sun, from Woodhenge's solar orientations. The sun has long been associated with ultimate power, an association implicit in the dominating aspect of Monks Mound itself. To be sure, that power was once commercial and political but it was also spiritual, if only in the sense that the enormous effort exerted by thousands of workers and artisans necessary to create the Cahokia megalopolis needed something transcending material and civic motives. Like the builders of Khufu's pyramid, they were not slaves. They were more likely inspired laborers and craftsmen motivated by a religious ideal whose priestly spokesmen convinced them they were doing God's work in building the City of the Sun.

Comparison with Egypt's Great Pyramid does not end with Monks Mound's relative size and the motivation of its builders. Both structures are aligned to true north and both are oriented to solar solstices. In fact, the Egyptians referred to

Khufu’s pyramid as the Mountain of Ra, their sun god. While Monks Mound may be only a little more than a thousand years old, the earliest settlement at Cahokia has been carbon dated to around 3000 B.C.E., the same era as Egypt’s first dynasty. Hesiod and other early Greek historians wrote of an *ecumene*, a worldwide civilization that flourished in a prehistoric Age of Gold. Could that ecumene have once touched both America and Egypt, where their solar principles—religious, scientific, and political—were preserved for thousands of years, generation after generation?

Angel Mounds was founded at roughly the same time Cahokia began to decline, around 1100 C.E., although the southern Indiana ceremonial center was substantially smaller. Some believe that site was built by migrants fleeing social dislocation at Cahokia. An important cultural link with Cahokia is a common solar alignment. The doorway of Angel Mounds’ chief temple was oriented to sunrise of the summer solstice, the same alignment occurring at Monks Mound. Cahokia is, in fact, physically linked to Angel Mounds by the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers.

About four thousand residents inhabited the 103-acre settlement, which included eleven earthen platform mounds surmounted by temples and palaces made of wooden posts and dried grass daubed over with white adobe. The mounds were interspersed with two hundred secular dwellings, some for winter, others for summer. Their walls were decorated with geometric themes colored red, yellow, and blue, lending the site a cheerful aspect. Nearby were numerous gardens of corn, beans, pumpkin, gourds, and sunflowers. Pecans were gathered in a lovely grove beside a step pyramid forty-four feet high and four acres in area. There was an unusual plaza sunk like a great bowl into the ground. Ceremonial, athletic, and market activities took place within this broad depression.

Figure 2.2. Photograph of Angel Mounds' reconstructed wall by Heironymous Rowe

Originally, the site was almost entirely surrounded by a river channel, practically rendering Angel Mounds an island. Whether or not this river channel was made by the ancient inhabitants is still a matter of professional debate. In any case, Angel Mounds was inexplicably abandoned by its leaders and most of its population about 1310 C.E. Why they left and where they went remain as mysteries still bedeviling scholars' best efforts to understand America's prehistory. The inhabitants left behind no signs of disease, war, social upheaval, crop failures, overfishing or hunting, earthquakes, or severe weather. For the next 140 years, the site was occupied off and on by diverse, small numbers of

primitive wanderers who knew little or nothing of Angel Mounds' former glories. By 1450 the place was deserted and unoccupied.

Among the unusual items recovered by archaeologists are a mastodon's tooth from a shaman's grave, and burial urns—circular pots containing the bones of infants covered over with pebbles. The most outstanding feature at Angel Mounds is a faithful reconstruction of the large temple building. The Indiana ceremonial city and Cahokia, as mentioned above, shared an identical solar orientation. But the Indiana center has a markedly different ambiance, not only because it is smaller than its parent city near the banks of the Mississippi River but also because, unlike Cahokia, little or no human sacrifice took place, and there were no large-scale acts of social violence. As a result, the godhead here may be less dramatic.

The sacred aspect of Angel Mounds is underscored by its island-like configuration, either natural or man-made. Its origins are relatively unimportant because the inhabitants of this place either chose the location for its peculiar features, or they purposely altered it (terra-formed it) to conform to their requirements. In many ancient cultures, water was perceived to be a boundary between this world and the next. Consequently, passing over the water from mundane existence outside the walls into the Otherworld of pyramid mounds constitutes an important ritual act in and of itself.

That the inhabitants of Angel Mounds regarded their city as something more than a commercial or political enterprise may also be surmised from the fragments of broken pottery decorated with cultic emblems. Among these are symbols delineating the sacred center. In every recovered example, the signs appear midpoint in representations of the sun. Angel Mounds was the leading sacred center of ancient America's solar cult after the fall of its former capital at Cahokia. Refugees from that collapse not only fled eastward into Indiana, but also northward into Wisconsin.

SECTION II

Ancient Unsolved Mysteries

7

Is a Templar Treasure at the Bottom of the Money Pit?

Connected to the Canadian mainland by a 660-foot-long causeway, Nova Scotia's 140-acre Oak Island hides one of the most frustrating if enduring mysteries of all time. Over the past 221 years, six men died and millions of dollars were invested in search of a nameless secret that has attracted hundreds of miners, engineers, archaeologists, treasure hunters, and enthusiasts, including John Wayne, Errol Flynn, Admiral Richard Byrd, President Franklin Roosevelt, and England's King George VI.

The enigma first came to light in early fall, 1795, when three woodsmen walking through southeastern Oak Island's unexplored, uninhabited wilderness happened upon a badly weathered tackle block dangling from the end of a thick, frayed hawser—a ship's rope—attached to the outstretched branch of an old tree. The old pulley was suspended directly over a circular depression suggesting the disturbed earth of a large burial. Intrigued, the men put aside their muskets and began shoveling. At two feet, they uncovered neatly laid out flagstones, a surprise that encouraged them to excavate another twenty-eight feet. After encountering log platforms every ten feet, they abandoned their strenuous effort.

Figure 7.1. Map showing the location of Oak Island, where the Money Pit is allegedly located

Subsequent digs at what became known as the Money Pit for its assumed riches came to nothing until 1803, when an expedition sailed three hundred miles from central Nova Scotia to Oak Island, where construction engineers dug farther down, finding log-made levels every ten feet, interspersed with mysterious layers of charcoal, putty, and coconut fiber at forty, fifty, and sixty feet. The nearest source for coconut is Georgia, seventeen hundred miles away. After a large stone bearing an inscription of unknown symbols was recovered at ninety feet, the pit was suddenly flooded with fifty-eight feet of water. Bailing efforts failed, and the excavation terminated.

Drilling forty-six years later passed through spruce and oak platforms at ninety-eight feet. Further excavations in 1866, 1893, and 1909 yielded no positive results due mostly to recurrent flooding. When a twelve-by-fourteen-

foot shaft was sunk close to the Money Pit in 1931, a metal axe, pick, and an anchor fluke were removed at 127 feet. Subsequent excavation projects in 1935, 1936, and 1959 came to nothing. The only scientific study of the Money Pit was a two-week survey conducted in 1995 by researchers from Massachusetts's Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. They concluded that its flooding was caused by natural interaction between Oak Island's freshwater fens and tidal pressures in the underlying geology, refuting the proposition of artificially constructed flood tunnels. Nothing else could be determined.

Current excavations are being undertaken by treasure hunters Rick and Marty Lagina, whose operations began airing in 2014 as *The Curse of Oak Island*, a documentary series on the History Channel. Among their most significant finds to date occurred when a sonar mapping device was lowered into a subterranean space over two hundred feet below the surface of the ground. The instrument revealed a rectangular room containing two moderately large rectangular objects. The chamber and possible chests appear to be man-made.

Until they are positively identified, however, wild speculation will continue to describe Oak Island as a repository for the Ark of the Covenant, Inca gold, King Solomon's mine, Marie Antoinette's jewels, Captain Kidd's treasure, Shakespeare's lost manuscripts, and a host of similarly implausible candidates. Of them all, one possibility stands out from the rest as being most likely responsible for the original creation of the Money Pit.

In the early twelfth century, Bernard de Clairvaux—better known after his death in 1153 as Saint Bernard—selected nine monks from his monastic order in France to serve as the Knights of the Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ. He dispatched them to Palestine, where they were supposed to protect travelers on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. They were welcomed by the Latin king of Jerusalem, Baudoin II, and he allowed them to establish their headquarters at the site of Solomon's Temple, on the city's Temple Mount, from which the name *Templar* derived.

Figure 7.2. Excavating Oak Island's Money Pit, circa 1900

Over the next two hundred years their numbers and wealth grew to such prodigious political and economic influence that they emerged as a state within a state, with its own church buildings, armies, and banks spread throughout Christendom. Within a few decades the Knights Templar had become the first Pan-European organization, its members and officers drawn from all over the continent, regardless of nationality, but less devoted to any particular country than to their own theology, more gnostic than mainstream Christian. Gnosticism emphasizes direct experience of God through mystical experience, which does not require priestly mediation. This heretical concept combined with royal greed during the early fourteenth century to bring about the sudden demise of the Knights Templar.

In October 1307, King Philip IV of France issued warrants for their arrest and seized all their holdings, while Pope Clement V disbanded the Order throughout Europe. Warned in advance, Templar Jean de Châlon heard rumors

that Gerard de Villiers, the Templar Master of France, had put to sea with eighteen galleys, and the brother Hugues de Châlon fled with the whole treasury of the brother Hugues de Pairaud, in charge of the Order's French assets. De Châlon's statement gave rise to modern theories that a Templar fleet loaded with riches escaped to somewhere in the Americas.

With papal proscription, the Knights Templar's Mediterranean fleet fled through the Straits of Gibraltar into the Atlantic Ocean for Portugal, where they were temporarily safe from the French king and Roman pope. Resupplied, ships and crews were joined by de Villiers's galleys, resuming their passage to Argyll, in Scotland. In just seven years they made themselves invaluable by turning the tide at 1314's Battle of Bannockburn, enabling Robert the Bruce to become the first king of an independent Scotland. Eighty-four years later, Henry Sinclair, Earl of Orkney, accompanied by fellow Templars, mounted a transatlantic expedition of twelve ships.

Fitchburg, Massachusetts, historian Michael Kaulback wondered why "Henry Sinclair set off with twelve ships and over three hundred men, a rather large force for an explorative mission, across the sea? The prince may have been looking for a place to start a colony far away from the suppression of the Templars that still raged in Europe."[1]

In any case, theirs was not entirely a voyage of discovery, because Henry had supposedly been informed by the survivor of four fishing boats blown across the sea to Newfoundland. From there, after twenty years, the lone castaway eventually fashioned his own makeshift craft that carried him back to Scotland, where he died just before the Earl's expedition was about to get underway.

"It is possible that Sinclair already knew of lands west of Greenland," writes researcher Steven Sora: "The Sinclair family had Norse connections through marriage, and they were aware of the Norse settlements in the western isles."[2] Years previous to his voyage, Henry conferred with Nicolo Zeno, who had been put in charge of designing and outfitting the Scottish vessels. Italy's foremost cartographer and navigator later penned a detailed account that left no doubt the expedition arrived at the appropriately named, Nova Scotia, "New Scotland."

In 1981 directors of Nova Scotia's Ministry of Culture asked Michael Bradley, an expert on the life of Henry Sinclair, to examine the ruins of a stone structure atop a hill at the middle of the peninsula. Bradley closed his two-year investigation of the site after concluding that the remains resembled rubblework construction consistent with Scottish fortifications as they appeared in the late fourteenth century.[3]

Kaulback described the early-twentieth-century discovery off Nova Scotia of "a cannon of the same kind displayed at the Naval Museum in Venice, and typical of the ordinance aboard Zeno's ships. The Nova Scotia cannon is presently housed in the fortress of Louisbourg, on Cape Breton Island. Such artillery was obsolete by the end of the fourteenth century, so the American find dates to the period of Prince Henry's expedition."[4]

Skeptics deny that he was a Templar, and assert that none existed by 1398, when the earl set sail for North America, because the Order had been officially abolished ninety years before. But they forget that Henry was also the Baron of Rosslyn, where his Chapel features an engraving portraying a Knight Templar holding his sword over the head of an initiate, to protect the secrets of the Order from being disclosed.

"Earl William St. Clair (Sinclair), the last Earl of Orkney," Kaulback writes, "was the Grand Master of Craftmasons in 1439. He was also the Grand Prior of the Scottish Knights Templar."[5]

Rosslyn Chapel is also adorned with the carved representations of aloe cacti and ears of corn—plants native only to the Americas at a time when the New World was as yet officially unknown. Speculation has been fueled by Templar artifacts "discovered in the Province of Quebec and elsewhere in the Maritime Provinces of Canada," writes Gerard Leduc in *Ancient American* magazine.[6]

A Templar breastplate "was found in the early 1950s by a farmer on the shores of Lake Memphremagog, which crosses into Vermont. It was purchased by Mr. Jacques Boisvert from Magog, Quebec. The surface of the metal appears free from corrosion, which suggests it was tin-plated. It has a reinforced rim all around its exterior, and the surface is incised with fine etchings illustrating various male and female figures," features characteristic of neo-Templar craftsmanship of the late fourteenth century.[7] This was the same period that Prince Henry Sinclair appears to have arrived in New England.

"A related discovery," Leduc continues, "was made during the early nineteenth century in Irasburg, Vermont, not far from Lake Memphremagog, when another farmer found chain armor under a large tree stump while plowing his field. The chain mail was made of rings about an eighth of an inch connecting a collar made of closely interwoven brass rings, all consistent with Templar armor. The object was given to surveying engineers, who happened to be in the area at that time. It was supposedly taken to New York City, as reported in an 1826 edition of the *Vermont Patriot*."[8]

On a midsummer's day in 2000, diver Nelson E. Jecas was hunting seashells along the Atlantic shores of New Jersey, near Bernardsville, where his attention was attracted by an unusual circular stone.[9] One side was embossed with a Knights Templar cross and a small hole had been drilled near the edge. The three-inch granite object impressed him as a kind of ornament or badge, its image partially water eroded by wave action over the course of what must have been a very long time. At least one such cross has been found engraved on a boulder at Oak Island, and some if not all glyphs on the stone dredged up from ninety feet beneath the surface of the ground in 1803 match mid-fifteenth-century mason marks from Scotland.

These mysteries coincide with the Knights Templar themselves, whose vast wealth—the real objective of King Phillip's hostility—disappeared before he could lay his hands on it. The treasure vanished with the Templar fleet to Henry Sinclair's kingdom, where the gold was partially used to buy protection from the Scottish prince, then spirited across the North Atlantic to a remote landfall at Nova Scotia, in 1398.

There, the Knights—long renowned for their genius as master masons, the builders of cathedrals, irrigation systems, the strongest bridges and impregnable castles—excavated the complex shaft as a deep deposit vault only they knew how to access. At its bottom, still untouched after more than six hundred years, perhaps in the rectangular chests recently detected by sonar, lies a fortune of incalculable riches.

10

Closing in on the Ark of the Covenant

The Ark of the Covenant is probably the most famous, sought after, and mysterious object ever described. It was supposed to have been a gold-plated wooden box for storing the original Ten Commandments given by God to Moses atop Mount Sinai. According to the Old Testament, however, the Ark was no mere sacred repository, but was endowed with energies powerful enough to defeat all enemies of the sorely outnumbered Hebrews. They used it to demolish the otherwise impregnable walls of Jericho and spread panic among their Philistine opponents.

Wielding this biblical weapon of mass destruction, they blasted their way into Jerusalem, founding Israel on the ruins of that Gentile kingdom, henceforward ruled by Solomon. He built a special temple to house the precious vessel in a central holy-of-holies, where it was venerated for more than three centuries. During 597 B.C.E., as Jerusalem was about to fall to invading Babylonians, the Ark was hidden by Levite priests and vanished forever after. Ever since, people have been searching for its whereabouts. Undeterred by their consistent lack of success, author Graham Phillips believes he is close to solving the age-old enigma.

"We have not yet managed to find the Ark," he admits, "but we did discover a strangely inscribed stone slab which may have been one of the tablets it contained."[1] About an inch thick, a foot and a half long, and a foot wide, the tablet is inscribed with thirteen separate symbols cut into it at a depth of about a quarter of an inch. Epigraphers in the United States have so far failed to effect their translation, but the sandstone itself comes from a mountain Phillips identifies as Mount Sinai. No less remarkably, the inscribed tablet believed to have been originally housed in the Ark of the Covenant was found in the center of England, not under Jerusalem's Temple Mount where majority opinion locates it.

Figure 10.1. Moses and Joshua bowing before the Ark. *Painting by James Tissot, circa 1900.*

Phillips writes that the Ark was discovered in a cave near the ruins of the ancient city of Petra in southern Jordan by Knights Templar from Temple Herdewyke in the English county of Warwickshire during the twelfth century. They brought it back to Britain after the crusaders went down in defeat. Two hundred years later, just before their descendants were wiped out by the Black Death, they left a series of strange paintings on the walls of a church in nearby Burton Dassett as clues to where they hid the Ark. Phillips traced the location revealed in these paintings to an old, holy well beside a road in the English village of Napton-on-the-Hill, in Warwickshire. It was during the course of these local investigations that the sandstone tablet was found.

“The Ark cannot be far behind,” Phillips believes. And so the quest goes on.

12

Today’s Megalith Builders

While many cannot explain why anyone would want to erect such ponderous stone structures, in Paleolithic times or now, some people today nonetheless feel compelled and delighted to exert back-breaking labor for the raising of colossal circles. Author Rob Roy tells how to move and align large stones for modern megalith-builders in his guide *Stone Circles: A Modern Builders Guide to the Megalithic Revival*.[1] Roy has himself participated in the design and construction of several such arrangements in Europe and North America and is part of a small but far-flung community, or fellowship of persons, determined to build their own megalithic sites simply because they love them.

He is the founder of the Earthwood Building School in West Chazy, New York, where he specializes in such unconventional building techniques as cordwood masonry and underground housing. The original megalith builders flourished in western Europe from four thousand to six thousand years ago. Although their most famous achievement was England’s Stonehenge, many hundreds more stone constructions were set up throughout the British Isles and across the Channel to the Atlantic coast of France. The sites included not only circles, but stones arranged in lines or standing alone. The largest surviving example is a single upright, referred to as a menhir, near Plouarzel in Brittany.

How such massive construction could have been accomplished millennia before the Industrial Age is an enigma underscored by modern attempts to duplicate the ancient megaliths, albeit on a much smaller scale. Modern builders have to use backhoes, machine-driven chain pulleys, and cranes just to lift and fit stones weighing less than a thousand pounds.

Figure 12.1. The infamous Georgia Guidestones represent an example of modern-day megaliths.

Roy and his fellow enthusiasts do admit to the nameless, spiritual joy the structures impart, and try to incorporate both heaven-and earth-oriented alignments in the placement of the stones. In doing so, they appear to have instinctually hit upon the original intention of the megalithic forerunners, who appear to have been driven to harmonize man with the powers of Mother Earth and Father Sky.

Not surprisingly, modern stone sites are often celebrated with Neolithic-like dances and rituals. Appropriately dressed celebrants dance through hoops raised aloft by flower-garlanded ladies at the old Keltic *Beltane* festival, and a Wickerman is immolated during *Lugnasad* in the company of newly erected megaliths.

Clearly, some of the old magic seems to have been revived by the very

placement of the stones themselves in imitation of ancient practices. Perhaps the loving intentions expressed are sufficient to conjure some of the old megalithic magic.

SECTION III

Pharaoh’s Egypt

15

The Book of Living and Dying

Though a well-worn subject, stunning representations of the Pyramid of Khafre, Giza's penultimate monument, against the backdrop of a starry night sky never fail to amaze me, and it always gives me a sense of wonderment to discover a new fact about Egypt.

Joann Fletcher's *The Egyptian Book of Living and Dying* shows a delicate, perfectly preserved papyrus illustration from the reign of Thutmoses III (circa 1430 B.C.E.).[1] It is a symbolic rendition of the Primal Mound in Egyptian myth, which told that it rose from the bottom of the sea and was the first home of humans and gods. Two female figures pour jars of water, which encircles the island on which men are shown tilling the soil as the sun rises from behind a twin mountain peak. Just two pages later we encounter a golden statuette of the artificer-god, Ptah, resplendent in lapis lazuli cap. Fletcher points out that the name "Egypt" may have derived from the god's enormous temple, the *Huwt-ka-Ptah,* or Mansion of Ptah's Soul.

Another masterpiece is the perfectly preserved wooden statuette of a priestess dressed in a clinging gown. Her name was Tuya, the mother-in-law of Amenhotep III. But her career was apparently other than religious, because she was also known as "chief of the entertainers" and sang in the great temples of Amun and Hathor.

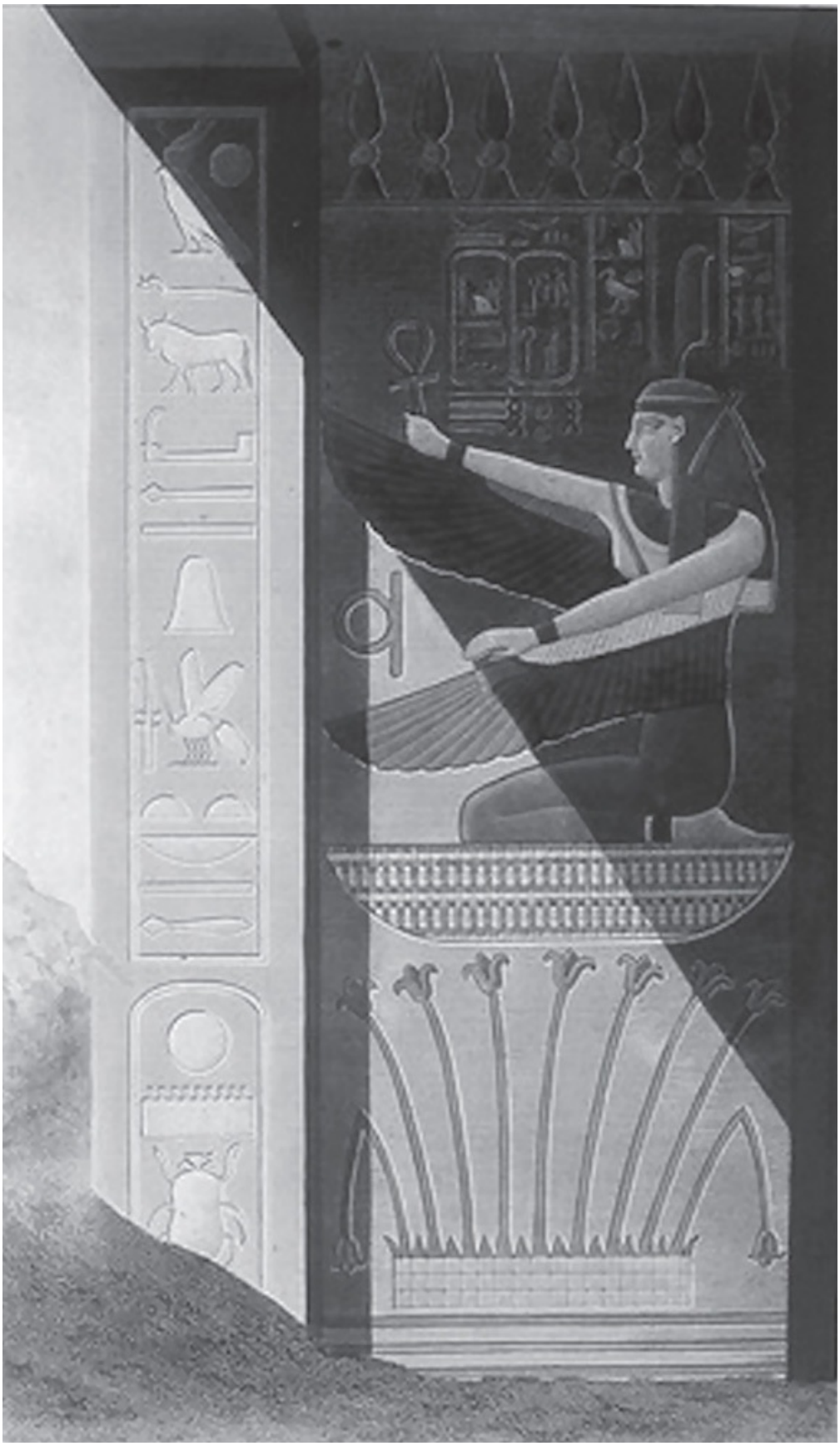

Figure 15.1. Maat, the divine personification of balance in all things

The religion of ancient Egypt was a gentle, life-affirming spirituality. Missing is a wrathful Jehovah intent on punishment or the heart-ripping monsters of the Aztec pantheon. Instead, the central principle of Egyptian spirituality was the notion of *Maat*, personified in a goddess of that name (see figure 15.1 above). All the other deities were obliged to follow her concept of universal balance and harmony. The only alternative was chaos. Maat represents perfect equipoise, the embodiment of truth, signified by a single feather standing upright. In the Hall of Judgment, it was weighed against the soul of a deceased person. If they balanced each other out, the soul was allowed to proceed to paradise.

If the scale tilted against the soul too heavy with sin, it was devoured by a crocodile-headed beast. But there was an alternative to this grisly fate. The mystery rites of the Benu bird, better known as the Phoenix, promised escape from the jaws of eternal death, not to paradise, perhaps, but in another go at earthly existence. The title of Fletcher's book directly refers to Maat, which regarded life and death as part of the pairs of opposites that comprise the universe and enable it to function.

The dynastic Egyptians believed human beings did not stand outside this process and could begin to lead successful lives once they grasped the significance of their place in the eternal struggle.

Although I have been a student of Egyptology since a child and traveled to Egypt several times, there is always something new to uncover.

SECTION IV

Places of Power in America

18

The Disturbing Imagery of Pre-Columbian America

Since 1983 I have been investigating the remains of a lost North American civilization known as Aztalan. Actually, that is just the name of its capital, once a 175-acre ceremonial city about halfway between Madison and Milwaukee in southern Wisconsin. Three mighty walls with watchtowers regularly spaced every twenty feet encircled a trio of earth pyramids oriented to the movements of the sun, moon, and the planet Venus. An extended irrigation system connected the city with Rock Lake, three miles away, where the enigmatic leaders of Aztalan society interred their honored dead in stone sepulchers on small islets.

Behind their forbidding walls the ancient aristocrats lived in fine houses, traded great quantities of raw copper mined from the Upper Great Lakes region, and farmed gourmet crops. There they also conducted rituals of human sacrifice and cannibalism. Then, in the early years of the fourteenth century C.E., they suddenly and inexplicably abandoned Aztalan, burning its walls to the ground and vanishing forever into the American wilderness. Why they abruptly relinquished their empire, which spread throughout Wisconsin and into neighboring Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana—with commercial links as far as the Gulf of Mexico and the Virgin Islands—continues to baffle researchers.

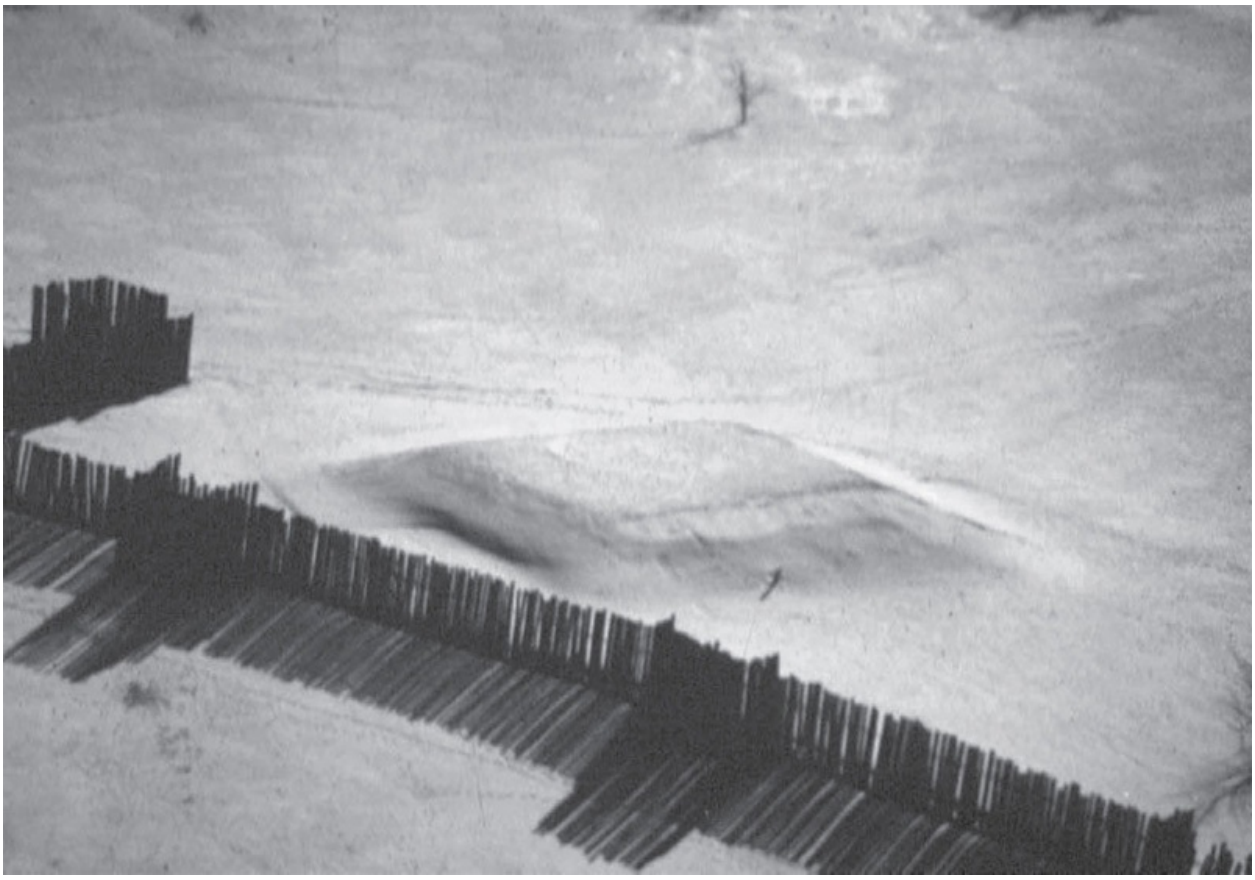

Figure 18.1. Aztalan's Pyramid of Venus behind re-created stockade. Aerial photograph by Frank Joseph.

Since their unaccountable disappearance seven centuries ago, the Rock Lake necropolis has gradually sunk beneath the waves and into legend. All that remains of Aztalan itself are two reconstructed mounds and a modern version of part of the wall, together with several hundred broken artifacts in several Wisconsin museums. In conducting my own investigation of this little-known chapter in ancient American history, I have called upon many old and original sources, but none more startling than the work of Theodore Hayes Lewis, a surveyor who, alone and with little money, personally explored and documented the prehistoric ceremonial centers and effigies of the Middle West.

Beginning in 1881 he eventually covered some 54,000 miles, more than 10,000 of them on foot, often foraging through the most hostile terrain, to find, measure, and document hitherto little-known or newly discovered ancient earthworks before they were obliterated—sometimes before his very eyes, as he was in the process of sketching them—by the inexorable advance of agricultural development. Twentieth-century analysis of his line drawings showed that all the

sites he documented before most of them vanished depicted authentically prehistoric, indigenous creations, not the work of white settlers or earlier explorers.

Because the fragile remains of pre-Columbian America were being destroyed by advancing civilization, Lewis knew he was working against time to at least preserve their memory. He was particularly interested in ancient rock art and the often-enormous effigy mounds—mostly animal representations, but some abstract designs skillfully sculpted from the earth itself. Lewis meticulously surveyed thousands of these pre-modern structures for fourteen years, dying in obscurity around 1930. Fortunately, his original artwork is preserved in dozens of large folders and microfilm copies at St. Paul's Minnesota Historical Center.

There I read his unpublished field notes written in his own hand, and paged through the vast collection of his illustrations. They range over the first to fifth centuries C.E., when North America's enigmatic civilizers raised an incredible ten thousand sculptures, a majority of them in Wisconsin, and Lewis succeeded in surveying most before they were forever lost. His accuracy in reproducing each one shows not only his dedication but also his professional expertise. He drew what he saw, bequeathing to new generations an exact likeness of a vanished world of gargantuan earth sculpture, commonly of giant creatures beautifully and precisely molded according to some forgotten standardized system of lengths and measures. Many are so realistically configured that the species of the animal portrayed can be readily identified. Others are bizarre, unfathomable abstracts.

As I paged through Lewis's illustrations I felt I was literally turning the pages of time to the late nineteenth century, seeing these wondrous images through his eyes and far beyond into the distant past. Clearly, most of the effigy mounds were accurate re-creations of what the ancient Americans saw on a daily basis. There were obvious figures of buffalo and deer, birds and fish, cats and dogs. Every so often, however, I came upon an image that riveted my attention in disbelief. Between the numerous representations of eagles or spiders appeared . . . elephants.

At first I doubted my own interpretation of the renderings. But there were others even more unmistakably elephantine. Nor were they images of mastodons, which did indeed inhabit our continent until about eleven thousand years ago. No, the ancient earth mounds represented modern elephants. Altogether, I counted six distinctly elephant effigies formerly located in Wisconsin's Rock and Vernon Counties, and Allamakee and Lansing Counties

in Iowa. But the Lewis drawings held more surprises.

At Dodge County, Wisconsin, he surveyed the 176-foot-long image of an oceangoing Arctic seal. On the north shore of Lake Wingra, he found the effigy of a Peruvian llama, 127 feet long and 3 feet high. How a people living at least a thousand years ago and inhabiting the Upper Middle West could have been familiar enough with creatures from India, the Arctic, and South America to so accurately portray them in colossal earthworks is no small mystery. At Pipestone Mountain, Wisconsin, Lewis reproduced a cave drawing of a nude male figure with a knotted club raised in its right hand—a typical representation of Hercules throughout Classical Europe, but found most often along the Atlantic shores of North Africa.

Near the American Hercules appears an unusual design, a triangle within a circle, a symbol occurring among the Guanche, the original, pre-Spanish inhabitants of the Canary Islands off the Moroccan coast. Is the Wisconsin figure an example of cultural coincidence, or was it left behind by visitors from far over the sea centuries ago? A clue may have formerly existed in certain earth effigies Lewis surveyed around Aztalan itself. They were gigantic mounds shaped into the configuration of oars, often in excess of 160 feet long; their very size suggests sea power. Perhaps they were the emblems of a proficient maritime people, who navigated farther than present-day mainstream scholars give them credit for, and who perhaps saw many animals not indigenous to the Midwest.

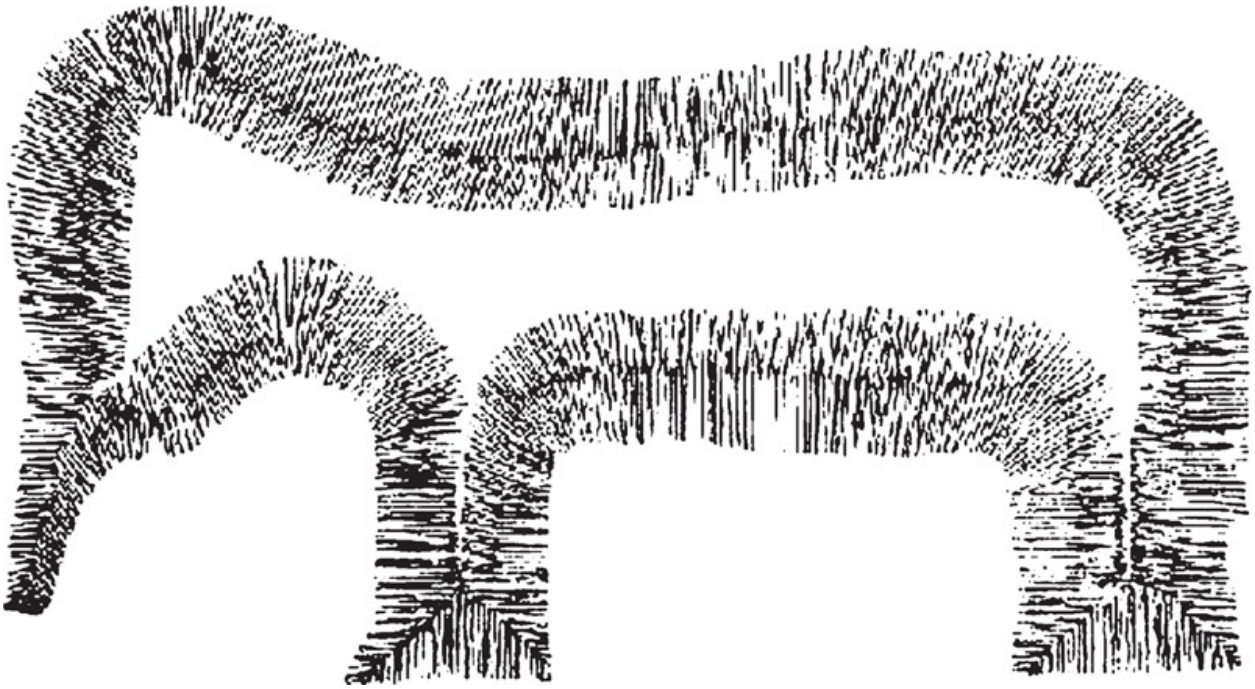

Figure 18.2. One of numerous elephant mounds in western Wisconsin illustrated by T. H. Lewis

This interpretation of the oar mounds as symbols of seamanship is underscored by the numerous examples of prehistoric American petroglyphs and cave art dealing with turtles and tridents, both indicative of travel by water. An even more perplexing image appeared in Rock County, near one of the elephant mounds, where Lewis discovered the 98.5-foot-long effigy of an animal with wheels instead of hooves. Historians are unanimously agreed that Native Americans had no knowledge of the wheel before the sixteenth-century arrival of Europeans. The singular earthwork self-evidently portrays a horse, a no less anomalous identity, because the animal was first introduced by the same modern Europeans.

The most famous wheeled horse in history, the Trojan horse, was invented by Bronze Age Greeks as a siege weapon in their war against Ilios, capital of Troy. Were the ancient creators of the Rock County effigy somehow familiar with Homer's epic? The mound is absolutely unique, lacking any other parallel among the many thousands of earthworks in North America or anyplace else. Together with the elephant and Hercules images, it at least suggests contact with Old World themes going back more than three thousand years. The atypical effigies surveyed by Lewis are not the only disquieting images in the North American landscape we documented.

The illustrations in question may portray a shaman's drug-induced hallucinations, or perhaps represent something else. Deep inside a large cave in Allamakee County, just west of the Mississippi River among yet more elephant mounds appeared an otherwise unseen figure. It seemed to Lewis related to a generally similar specimen of rock art he copied from inside a cave in La Crosse County on the east bank of the Mississippi. The subterranean walls of both the Iowa and Wisconsin sites were decorated with the profuse imagery of stars, suns, and crescent moons, implying a celestial setting.

Portrayed amid Allamakee County's heavenly depiction floated a kind of zoomorphic vehicle with two orderly rows of fourteen rectangular windows and something resembling a burst of radiant energy streaming from or behind its dorsal position. La Crosse County's cave contained the even more bizarre image of a vaguely humanoid creature descending from the night sky. Was this rock art the result of altered states of consciousness, or was it intended to illustrate mythic tales that were forgotten with their prehistoric creators?

Or were these extraterrestrial-like images, like the recognizable effigy mounds of Middle Western fauna, the re-creation of things the ancient artists actually witnessed? However one may attempt to answer such questions, they never would have been considered without the life's work of Theodore Lewis.

21

The Sacred and Profane in Southern Wisconsin

For more years than anyone can guess, a broad, indefinite expanse of southern Wisconsin has been regarded by successive generations of diverse residents as a sacred region unique for its compelling, sometimes dark qualities. The famous writer of fantastic tales, August Derleth, often spoke of the area's "*Cthulhu* power-zones," concentrations of supernal energies so focused they could transform mere mortals into either angels or demons.[1] The denizens of Aztalan, a walled pyramid city that flourished forty-five miles west of Milwaukee eight hundred years ago, appear to have succumbed to the dark side of Cthulhu, as their civilization dissolved into human sacrifice and cannibalism, culminating in the fiery destruction of their great ceremonial center around 1325 C.E.

At the polar opposite of Aztalan is the modern Buddhist monastery of Deer Park, just south of Madison, the state capitol. The center is home and school to monks from Tibet who were forced to leave their homeland during the Communist Chinese invasion of 1959. His Holiness, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, left with 100,000 followers, most of whom resettled in India. The Wisconsin retreat is the Midwest outpost of that twentieth-century Diaspora. But the Buddhists do not proselytize, even though their teachings are open to interested persons. And while they long to return to their despoiled country, our own is made richer for their serene, unobtrusive contribution to America's spiritual life.

Figure 21.1. The Deer Park Temple. Photograph by Frank Joseph.

Their teachers offer classes throughout the year on theological topics and ritual practices, as well as the Tibetan language. The monks, who dedicate their lives to following the traditional moral discipline set out in Buddhist scripture, perform ancient ceremonies. The abbot, Geshe Lhundup Sopa, is among the most outstanding Buddhist scholars in the world. He established Deer Park in 1976. Its name derives from the grove in ancient India where deer were allowed to wander freely, the same grove where Buddha first enunciated the Four Noble Truths. In the past 42 years, the monastery has built an authentic Tibetan temple furnished with numerous *tankas,* or illuminated scrolls, and graceful statuary. The library contains extensive collections of Buddhist literature in Khangyur (the Tibetan language), Chinese, Japanese, Hindi, and Sanskrit. A large house provides living quarters, offices, and a conference hall. The outstanding physical feature of Deer Park is its *stupa,* a sacred monument of glistening white marble and gilt decoration, roughly pyramidal in shape, about eighteen feet tall. From its base, the state capitol dome, itself a white monument of another kind, appears floating on the distant horizon, separated from this Little Tibet by a gently

sloping valley.

Deer Park's newly built stupa was personally dedicated by the Dalai Lama himself, when he visited the monument in 1989. He turned on the power, as it were, but admonished those attending the dedication ceremony that it was more important to build a stupa in their hearts. Even so, the impressive monument, incongruous as it may seem in the pastoral Wisconsin countryside, is a focal point of local telluric energy and part of Buddhist thought. Buddhism's chief aim is the personal attainment of a state of mind transcending mundane existence to achieve inner peace and self-mastery.

To attain that goal, the Four Noble Truths must be recognized. These are: (1) suffering is endemic to the human condition; (2) suffering is most often caused by ignorance, hatred, and attachment to those material things that keep us from our higher destiny; (3) freedom from suffering is possible; and (4) the means are available to win that freedom. These methods include the Hinayana and the Mahayana, or the Lesser and Greater Vehicles. The Hinayana establishes a strong sense of morality, improved concentration, and insight into the underlying nature of reality. The Mahayana graduates from the Lesser Vehicle toward genuine enlightenment, omniscience, and heartfelt compassion. Thus attained, the Mahayana divides into the Perfect Vehicle, with its emphasis on generosity, perseverance, and wisdom, plus the Tantra Vehicle, largely concerned with advanced levels of meditation.

The stupa represents all these realizations of the Buddha, the Enlightened One. But as a sacred form it predates his era, going back to far earlier, distantly related concepts of the oldest Hindu beliefs, as shown in the Adytas. These are gilded human figures along the base of the monument, supporting the level signifying the sky, or floor of heaven. The Adytas are themselves even more venerable than the Hindu style in which they are executed, because they were originally representative of Atlas, the mythic character preserved in the religion of the classical Greeks (themselves a people with roots in the East) as a Titan supporting the sky.

Atlas was the eponymous figure of Plato's Atlantis, inflected throughout many esoteric traditions as the cradle of the world's mystery religions. An Atlantean parallel with Buddhism does not end with the Adytas' Atlas-like appearance on Wisconsin's stupa. The monument features a representation of the Cosmic Egg from which all things came and to which they will eventually return in a self-renewing cycle. The same concept traces back to the Greek memory of their Pelasgian ancestors, an Atlantean Sea People, whose emblem was the Cosmic Egg emerging from the jaws of a serpent, itself symbolic of the vital

power of the universe.

It is wonderful to see in Deer Park's modern stupa the collected spiritual ideas of perhaps five thousand years. In fact, the dome of the stupa is referred to as the *anda*, or egg, and sometimes as the *garbha*, or womb. *Garbha* is a particularly appropriate term in view of the name of the chief religion allegedly practiced in Atlantis, the Navel of the World. The stupa's four gateways, signifying the four cardinal directions, repeat this world-center symbolism. Interestingly, even the term *Dalai Lama* derives from *ta-le*, or ocean.

Modern Tibetan Buddhism appears to preserve esoteric concepts and symbols from its Atlantean origins still in evidence at Deer Park. The deer is an appropriate emblem of the monastery not only for its early association with the Buddha's basic teaching. The animal personifies rebirth through the process whereby its antlers regenerate themselves. Its symbolic origins are no less old than Atlantis itself, and perhaps even more so, because the Neolithic sites of Çatal Hüyük, which flourished eight thousand years ago in what is now central Turkey, connected the deer with the sun's capacity to rejuvenate life.

Deer Park is certainly a hallowed site on a high level of mysticism over an equally deep level of living esoterica. The monks' choice for this location for their retreat tends to reaffirm the numinous character of southern Wisconsin as an extended sacred region. While the stupa is Wisconsin's most recent sacred site, the state features another monument of spiritual power about forty-five miles north and many centuries older. This is the so-called Man Mound, one of the more than ten thousand prehistoric earth sculptures known to have adorned the Upper Midwest before the arrival of modern Europeans.

Fashioned into the images of bears, panthers, turtles, birds, and beasts from the subconscious, these effigy mounds were usually crafted on a colossal scale. None were more mysterious than the Sauk County geoglyph near Baraboo. Originally about eighty feet long from crown to toe, three feet high, and twelve feet broad at the shoulder, it is the representation of a faceless man wearing a horned helmet and artistically molded into the northern slope of a hill overlooking a declining prairie. This mutilated survivor is one of a handful that still remain scattered throughout Wisconsin.

The majority were obliterated during the nineteenth century, mostly by way of the farmer's plow. The effigies were the earthen artworks of an unknown people who occupied territories from the Mississippi River to Lake Michigan from the third century B.C.E. to the fifth century C.E. However, this time frame is almost entirely speculative, and fresh evidence implies a greater antiquity for

their creators. After the turn of the last century, engineers laying Sauk County's first paved road eradicated the Man Mound below the knees. Local citizens were outraged by such callous destruction and formed a foundation for the preservation of what remained of the desecrated terraglyph.

The similar (although not identical) effigy of a human giant could still be seen in neighboring La Valle until the 1930s, when an irrigation project buried it under thirty feet of water. Today, the Sauk County effigy mound is maintained as a wayside park, lonely and seldom visited. A wooden observation tower affords an improved view. But who or what was the Man Mound supposed to represent? When French immigrants were settling in the town of Baraboo during the early 1830s, the resident Sauk Indians still revered the geoglyph as the sacred image of Wakt'cexi.

Figure 21.2. This early twentieth century photograph of Wisconsin's

Man Mound (showing it upside down) has been chalked-in to highlight the effigy's anthropomorphic configuration.

This was the anthropomorphic water spirit who saved their ancestors by leading them to safety on the eastern shores of Turtle Island (the North American continent) after a Great Flood drowned their original lodge place, or homeland, in the Sunrise Sea (the Atlantic Ocean). The Sauk legend is more than a little reminiscent of Plato's story of Atlantis. In the fourth century B.C.E., the Athenian philosopher told of a splendid island-city in the Atlantic Ocean swallowed by a natural catastrophe. Its survivors scattered throughout the world.

Comparisons between the Native American and ancient Greek accounts do not end here. Incised in the well-preserved stone walls of a Twentieth Dynasty temple in Egypt's Valley of the Kings are the individualized portraits of invaders wearing horned helmets. Referred to as the *Meshwesh,* or Sea Peoples, they were soundly defeated in a series of large-scale military campaigns ranging from the Lower Nile Valley into Palestine. The Egyptian defenders were led by a vigorous pharaoh, Ramses III, who built a Victory Temple to his triumph over the marauders. Their testimony was recorded on the limestone walls.

It tells how the Meshwesh invaded Egypt because their oceanic capital sank, flaming, beneath the sea. These historical events took place around 1200 B.C.E., and although that date cannot be positively identified with the Wisconsin effigy, it can be connected to the Man Mound's British counterpart. This similar figure is found in the south of England, not far from Bristol. Known as the Long Man of Wilmington, it is the chalk outline of another faceless man cut into the slope of a hill and reliably dated to the late Bronze Age.

It too originally wore a horned helmet, all traces of which were erased in the early nineteenth century. About three times as large as the Sauk County effigy, it nonetheless has the same orientation—on the north side of a hill overlooking a low-lying area. Both the Baraboo and British earth giants were intended by their creators to be seen from a distance and appear proportionate at ground level. Viewed from the air the two hill figures are elongated distortedly, proving that the makers of both effigies understood the principles of applied proportion through foreshortening, suggesting the geoglyphs were produced by a common culture. An explanation for the Man Mound's location in southern Wisconsin might be found in its relation to the ancient copper mining that took place in the Upper Great Lakes region.

Ore was extracted in tens of thousands of tons from 3000 B.C.E. to 1200

B.C.E. by a people unknown to archaeologists. Here again occurs the date for the final destruction of Atlantis (circa 1200 B.C.E.), that same time period in which the Sea Peoples invaded Egypt and left their testimony of a sunken city on the walls of Ramses III's Victory Temple. At the same historical moment, England's Long Man of Wilmington was created, and ancient North America's copper mining enterprise was abruptly halted. Combined with the Sauk tradition of the Man Mound as a water spirit from an ancestral deluge, the evidence points persuasively to an Atlantean identity for the Wisconsin terraglyph.

Figure 21.3. England's Long Man of Wilmington. Photograph by Frank Joseph.

Significantly, when the Long Man of Wilmington was cut into its hillside, Britain was known as the Cassiterides, or Tin Isles, for its abundant deposits of the metal. Copper combined with tin (and lesser amounts of zinc) produces bronze, and both the English and Wisconsin hill figures probably date back to

the late European Bronze Age, 3,200 years ago. The Sauk themselves were also known by their Algonquian tribal name as the *Osakiwug*, or People of the Outlet, a reference to the landing of their ancestors on the eastern shores of North America after the Great Flood.

It seems more than ironic that the Man Mound's companion earthwork at La Valle—likewise a memorial to the Deluge—should itself suffer a modern flood when the modern irrigation project covered it under five fathoms of water. Emphasis has been placed on the historical features of Wisconsin's Man Mound because the hill figure derives much of its mystical milieu from its Atlantean origins. By tapping into its resident energies we may also reestablish that very ancient bond with mankind's lost homeland.

For unknown centuries, the anthropomorphic earthwork was the site of neo-Atlantean ceremonial activity, which supercharged the very soil with reverberating forces still sensed by visitors. Its faceless features are in some measure a part of its mysterious, powerful appearance. Although Deer Park's stupa and Baraboo's Man Mound are vastly separated in time, their shared location in southern Wisconsin is a survival from the high spirituality of Atlantis, which left evidence of its impact around the world.

22

Prehistoric Landscape Sculpture of the Middle West

Our schools are very deficient in educating their students about the human prehistory of North America. For example, most Americans are unaware that their predecessors here created an art form on a colossal scale unmatched anywhere else in the world. More than ten thousand earth sculptures once spread from eastern Minnesota, throughout Wisconsin, down to northern Illinois, across Indiana, and into Ohio.

The majority of these effigy mounds were concentrated in Wisconsin; many of these were documented by T. H. Lewis as discussed in chapter 18. Sometimes over a thousand feet long, they were superbly molded images of birds, dogs, snakes, bears, panthers, buffalo, men, fish, and turtles, referred to by archaeologists as *biomorphs*. Others, known as geoglyphs, were abstract shapes, linear embankments, ridge-topped mounds, and conical pyramids. Still others were crafted into designs clearly representing beasts that the pre-Columbian inhabitants of our continent were supposed to know nothing about—namely, elephants and horses.

To these early artists the rolling plains of the Upper Midwest comprised a vast canvas for a regional menagerie of oversized animal figures. But they signified far more than artistic achievement, however monumental. Each effigy mound marked a particular sacred site, a concentration of Earth energies used by tribal shamans and their initiated followers. The effigy mounds were places of spiritual power epitomized in the shapes of animals. Birds were synonymous with the soul, bears signified rebirth, as did snakes, but what the other creatures symbolized to the prehistoric mound builders is less certain.

Comparably ancient hill figures such as the White Horse of Uffington or the Cerne-Abbas Giant can still be seen in Britain, while Peru’s Nazca desert is famous for its prehistoric and gigantic illustrations of animals such as spiders

and condors. But North America once boasted by far the largest collection of zoomorphic landscape art on Earth. Tragically, most of it was destroyed by the farmer's plow as settlers moved across the Upper Middle Western states in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Archaeologists hurried from one effigy mound to another, preserving them at least in pencil sketches and surveyed measurements prior to the earth sculptures' obliteration, sometimes before the very eyes of scholars.

Only a few examples survive as testimony to the creative skill and nature-oriented spirituality of a vanished people. The most impressive specimen lies atop a steep hill in the Ohio Valley. Visitors enter the site off the main road via an ascending driveway that ends in a parking lot before a small museum. An aerial view of the quarter-mile-long geoglyph is afforded by climbing to the top of a twenty-foot observation tower nearby. From this overlook the snake appears to writhe across the ridge in seven humps, its huge jaws agape before an egg-shaped mound, its tail ending in a spiral.

With an average width of twenty feet and a height of five feet, the serpent's overall length is 1,254 feet, following its coils and humps. Although the Great Serpent Mound is clearly discernible at ground level and more so from the observation tower, it can be fully appreciated from the vantage point of an airplane at three hundred to five hundred feet above the structure. From any point of view, however, its fine proportions testify to the technical and artistic sophistication of its creators. Who they may have been and when they built the mound are questions still debated by investigators more than 170 years after its discovery.

Figure 22.1. Ohio's Great Serpent Mound

Answers range from the dogma of conservative scholars certain the image was built by ancestors of local Indians only a few centuries ago, to the controversial conclusions of archaeoastronomers who argue that the structure, which appears to represent the constellation Draco, was oriented to that area of the night sky around 2000 B.C.E. Whoever its builders may have been, they thoroughly cleaned up after themselves. Not a trace of tools, implements, or weapons of any kind have ever been excavated from the site. Its construction involved careful planning. Flat stones were selected for size and uniformity, and lumps of clay were laid along the ground to form a serpentine pattern.

Then, basketfuls of soil were piled over the pattern and finally molded into shape. This process formed an interlinking reinforcement of various materials that have preserved the Great Serpent Mound's configuration over centuries or millennia. The effigy lies in proximity to other significant archaeological sites. Among these are Fort Hill in neighboring Highland County, an enormous stone enclosure above the Ohio Bush River; Mound City, near Chillicothe; and Fort Ancient, another walled enclosure.

Farther still from the Ohio Valley, at the shores of Lake Nell near the port town of Oban, Scotland, winds a serpent mound less than half the size of its

American counterpart but closely resembling it in other respects. The intriguing correspondences linking the Ohio earthwork with ancient Old World myth convince some observers that it is the handiwork of overseas visitors in prehistoric times. Others reject such parallels as just so much coincidence. The Serpent Mound was never a habitation site, and served instead as a ceremonial center attracting worshipers from great distances.

In Old Europe the serpent-and-egg theme was associated with the deified physician of ancient Greece, Asclepius. He was regularly portrayed in surviving classical art beside a snake with an egg in its mouth. The same image was known much earlier to the Egyptians as *Kneph*, the sky serpent, from whose jaws the Cosmic Egg, the source of all life, emerged. As it happens, the Great Serpent Mound's location is unique, situated as it is near the western edge of a crater formed by a meteor that struck the Earth about three thousand years ago. Did the effigy's creators witness a meteor strike and raise the biomorph as a visual explanation of the event?

In any case, its position at the edge of an astrobleme, or impact crater, implies that archaeoastronomers may be correct in suggesting that the mound was made in reference to some celestial happening. In October 1983, a dispassionate researcher with no interest in the paranormal was visiting the Great Serpent Mound for the first time. He was alone after closing time at the archaeological park near sunset, when an uneasy feeling gradually crept over him. He could not shake the sensation of being watched. The nameless anxiety grew by degrees until it seemed the woods entirely surrounding the site were filled with the presence of unseen people silently and intensely staring at him. He noticed, too, that not a breath of wind stirred. No birds sang in the trees. The whole area was absolutely calm and still as though under a glass dome.

"It suddenly seemed like the inside of a cathedral," he later remembered. He felt strangely welcome and at peace. The feeling of being watched was so strong he almost expected to see native faces peering out at him from behind the leaves. Years later he was surprised to read in *Mystic Places*, from the famous Time Life Mysteries of the Unknown series, that another visitor to the Great Serpent Mound described a similar encounter, although of a decidedly less amiable character.[1] This person, too, experienced the abrupt calm and feelings of being watched. But as he walked around the jaws of the effigy, hundreds of dried leaves suddenly swirled together, rising in the form of a large man. The visitor fled in horror, never to return.

While the world's largest surviving zoomorph is found in Ohio, another

effigy mound in Wisconsin is no less impressive a sacred site. At Lizard Mounds, in the eastern part of the state, the visitor approaches the site by car, driving through open sparsely populated farm country. But the moment he turns onto the road leading into the public park, the site stands out boldly—a small but dense forest of tall pine trees alone among an ocean of fields. From the parking lot a marked trail winds through the woods to each of the thirty-one large effigy mounds masterfully sculpted from the earth itself into the vibrant images of birds, reptiles, panthers, buffalos, and unidentifiable creatures. They seem to move among powerfully centered linear structures, including embankments and conical pyramids.

Altogether, these earthworks comprise the largest surviving collection of geoglyphs in North America. No other group is so numerous, well preserved, or diversified in form; no other group exhibits such outstanding examples of prehistoric art on so colossal a scale. The figures are expressionistic, though stylized. Nothing about them bespeaks the crude, the savage, or the primitive. They are all proportional, refined, and graceful, reflecting the ordered minds that conceived, molded, and appreciated them, to say nothing of the skillfully organized system of labor and surveying technology responsible for their creation.

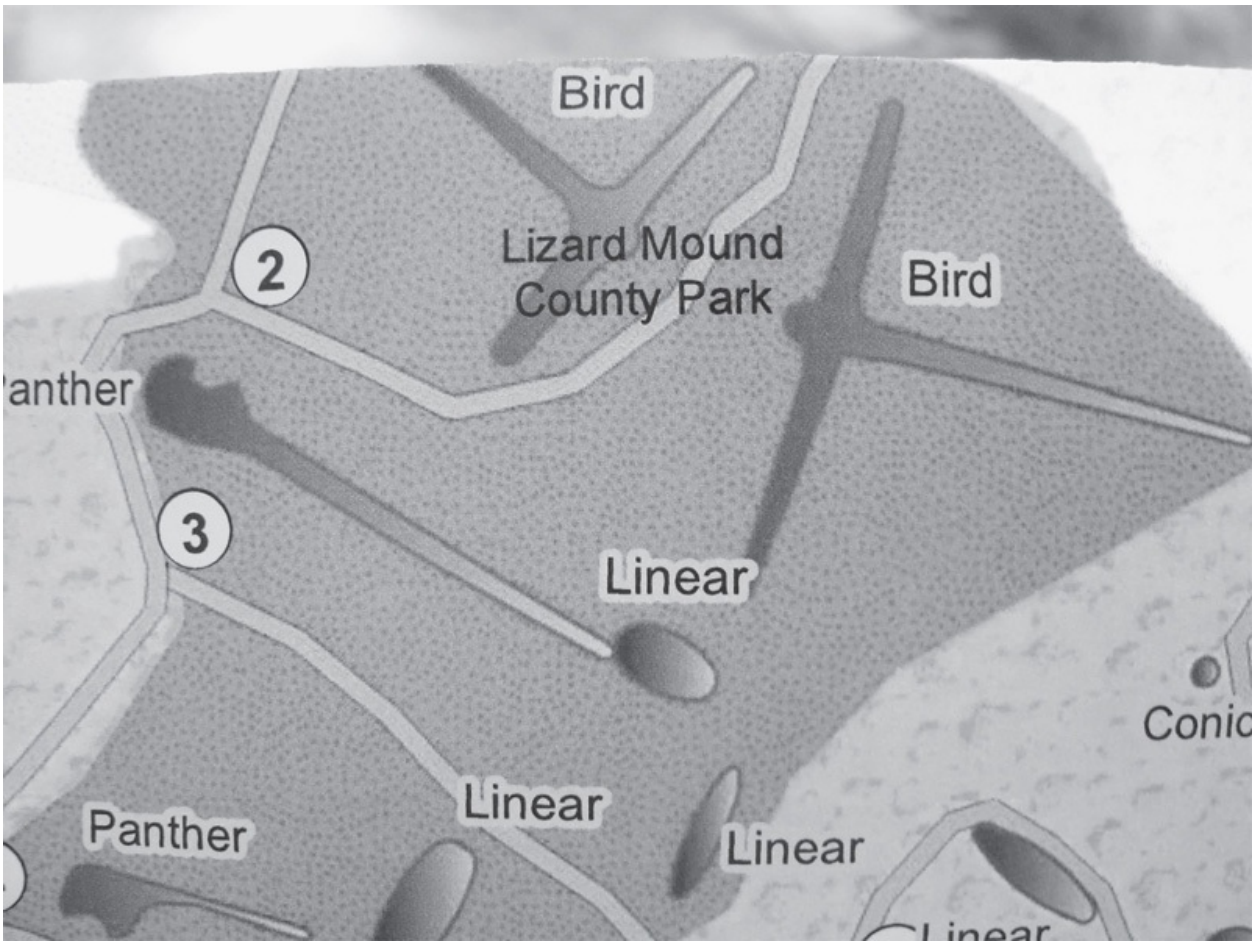

Figure 22.2. A sign from Lizard Mounds, Wisconsin. Photograph by Frank Joseph.

Who their builders and worshipers were, not even the resident Menomonee Indians can tell. The place is, therefore, a prehistoric enigma. All that seems certain is that it was finally abandoned around 1319 C.E. for reasons unknown. Even the dates of its construction and occupation are doubtful. It would appear, however, to have been laid out by the same people who built Aztalan, a city flourishing about seventy-five miles to the southwest, because identically styled earthworks once surrounded that remarkable ceremonial center. Aztalan's final phase, when the population within and outside its stockaded walls may have reached ten thousand or more inhabitants, began around 1100 C.E. and ended suddenly at the same time Lizard Mounds was deserted. In any case, a few of the Lizard Mounds effigies served as tombs.

The deceased were placed in pits beneath the geoglyphs with decorated clay pots, bone harpoons, pipes, copper arrowheads, and ritual crystals. The precinct

was used exclusively for spiritual purposes. No one ever resided within the sacred arena; settlement was in surrounding villages. The largest effigy of the group is three hundred feet in length, but the site derives its modern name from a 238-foot-long figure thought to represent a lizard. Even so, the figures are not so large that they cannot be made out at ground level.

Seen at altitude, however, they assume a startling perspective to appear in their proper proportions, implying that they may be appreciated only from the sky. In this feature, at least, they can be compared with Ohio's Great Serpent Mound. The modern park trail appears to follow closely the original ritual path used by the ancient worshipers as their processions wound from one effigy to the next. Today's pilgrim walks for about 250 feet through the woods before coming to the first structure, the longest of the slender linear mounds, some two hundred feet in length.

It marks the real beginning of the sacred precinct. Beyond it stands a small, conical pyramid, followed by a teardrop figure pointing at another cone of the same size. All the mounds are only three or four feet high. Despite having endured unknown centuries of erosional forces, the earthworks were probably not much larger at the time of their creation than they now appear. The first animal effigy encountered is the so-called Panther Mound. Visitors come upon it gradually, imperceptibly, from the point of its tail. The tail thickens by degrees as the bioglyph takes form. As it does so its power seems to gather momentum, increasing along the arched back to the massive head. It is flanked by a pair of large conical mounds.

The trail forces each visitor to walk between the two cone pyramids. These are followed by a smaller linear structure. A few paces more brings the forepart of the most massive of the panthers into view. There are three more such earthworks before visitors reach the focal point of the site—a pair of elongated figures facing each other in a combined spread of 425 feet. The trail leads directly between their heads, narrowing the site's inherent energy into a narrow gap. It is important to know that the sole surviving Indian tradition of Lizard Mounds involves this very spot.

The Menomonee remember that each winter solstice their ancestors gathered behind these twin zoomorphs to observe sunset before the longest night of the year, marking the world's transition from darkness back into the light, and the human soul's reemergence from death to light. Tribal leaders stood at the twin-headed focal point. At that critical moment, as the sun shed its last ray precisely between the two animal heads, the great shift between darkness and light—death and life—took place. Curious if this Menomonee tradition had any basis in fact,

James Scherz arrived at Lizard Mounds on the late afternoon of 1989's winter solstice. A professor of Civil Engineering and Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and pioneer of archaeoastronomy in his state, he was highly qualified to test any scientific basis for Native American myth.

As he observed dusk on the longest night of the year, Professor Scherz saw the sun go down precisely between the two earth-sculpted birds' heads, just as described by the Menomonee Indians. Just beyond the zoomorphs lies the effigy mound after which the set has been named. The lizard represents the underlying motive force of all living creatures, the vital spirit of action. In native South American symbolism the lizard is associated with precipitation, from dew to deluge, although that meaning does not seem to apply at the Wisconsin location. The trail leads away from the eponymous earthwork to smaller effigies, including a pair of linear embankments pointing to the only oval mound at the site.

While not so spectacular as the others, it is the key to this sacred center, representing as it does the Cosmic Egg, the Womb of Life, earlier encountered at Ohio's Great Serpent Mound. More than any other figure, the oval earthwork identifies the site as a sacred center. The trail passes between the heads and along the outstretched wings of two enormous bird effigies. Perhaps they were meant to signify the uplifting experience of walking among the colossal figures of Lizard Mounds.

Although America's surviving effigy mounds are few in number, they still resonate with at least some telluric power of the Earth from which they were so beautifully fashioned long ago.

23

Illinois's Gold Pyramid, Iowa's Grotto of Gems, and Tennessee's Greek Temple

Drivers speeding along Highway 94 forty miles north of Chicago occasionally catch a glimpse of a glittering anomaly in the otherwise ordinary suburb of Wadsworth, Illinois. Built in 1974, America's own pyramid is the private home of the James Onan family, who, until the mid-1990s, opened their untypical domicile to the public each summer. Visitors were confronted by the forty-foot-tall colossus of a pharaonic figure, the largest freestanding statue of its kind outside Egypt. It continues to guard the eighteen-acre estate in which the gleaming pyramid stands surrounded by an eight-foot wall decorated with hieroglyphic motifs.

South of the 200-ton statue is a gift shop where jewelry, clothing, statuettes, plates, prints, and numerous other items reflecting Egyptian themes can still be purchased via the internet. Leaving through the east exit of the gift shop, visitors used to skirt a large gravel mound to the left until they arrived at a flight of stone steps leading to a darkened doorway at the top of the mound. The structure is a re-creation of the tomb of Tutankhamun, who ruled Egypt 3,350 years ago. A ramp descends gently through a corridor painted with scenes from the Book of the Dead (an ancient Egyptian guide for the soul's progress to the Otherworld) and opens into an exact copy of the boy-king's burial chamber.

Figure 23.1. The Gold Pyramid House. Photograph by Frank Joseph.

The tomb contains an abundance of real gold crafted into furniture, a dagger, a large death mask, and statues. This brilliant collection is surrounded by far greater treasures in the next chamber, where a full-sized, accurate version of the pharaoh's enormous sarcophagus is reproduced in 14-karat gold. The walls surrounding it are decorated with scenes from his funeral and soul's ascension to godhood, identical to the Egyptian original. In the adjacent room gold statues of protective goddesses stand at the four corners of a canopied shrine seven feet high and ten feet long, wrought entirely in real gold.

Visitors emerged from these dazzling sights through a south exit and followed the sidewalk to the Pyramid House, about 150 yards to the east. The house is surrounded by a moat, and its twelve thousand square feet of walls are covered with 24-karat gold plate gleaming amid the spring-fed waters. Access is across a bridge and walkway flanked on either side by rows of sphinx statues. At fifty-five feet in height, the Gold Pyramid is a 1:100-scale replica of Egypt's Great Pyramid on the Giza Plateau. Like the original, the six-story structure is oriented to true north. Its interior contains seventeen thousand feet of living space, featuring a full-sized re-creation of Tutankhamun's ceremonial chariot

covered entirely in gold.

The Chariot Room also displays some authentic Egyptian artifacts, many statues of gods and goddesses, another solid-gold coffin lid, and hundreds of marvelous objects to catch the eye and delight the senses. The Pyramid House is unquestionably an evolving sacred site, one of the latest in North America, although that is not the original intention of its builder and owner. Yet from its very inception it has evidenced many qualities typically identified with sacred centers.

As an experienced and successful contractor, James Onan knew not to build over an underground water source. Even so, weeks after the foundations of the Pyramid House were laid, a freshwater spring inexplicably bubbled forth at the very center of the construction. It grew so large that it completely surrounded the structure, making the pyramid an island. Remarkably, archaeologists know that during its civilized heyday the Giza Plateau was likewise completely surrounded by water from the river Nile. Access to the Great Pyramid then was via a bridge, just as the Illinois Gold Pyramid is reached today.

What mysterious forces required that North America’s twentieth-century version of the Great Pyramid be encircled by a moat like its ancient Egyptian counterpart? Tests of the spring surrounding the Gold Pyramid House reveal its excellent purity and high mineral content. Onan bottled the water, and people from around the world have come to swear by its remarkable curative properties. Just before the unexpected arrival of the freshwater spring, a bulldozer broke its steel teeth against a large, immovable outcropping of black rock. Chunks of it were sent to the Colorado Assay Office in Denver for analysis.

Meanwhile, the spring continued to rise ever higher, eventually drowning the black rock lying just outside the perimeter of the foundation under twenty feet of water. It was then that the Colorado report arrived, informing the astounded Onan that the sample pieces were gold ore! He is the only person to have found gold in Illinois, and at the very spot of his Gold Pyramid. So far he has been unsuccessful in retrieving the submerged mass of gold at the bottom of the moat. Clearly, he had been directed to build the Gold Pyramid at this appropriate place.

Claims that pyramid structures exert some kind of preservative influences are borne out at Onan’s unusual home. He experimented with different kinds of food placed at various locations inside and in its immediate vicinity. They naturally spoiled over time, save one banana that he left at the midpoint between the very center of the Gold Pyramid and its south wall, halfway up the structure, on its second floor. Incredibly, the fruit desiccated but refused to rot. To this day,

more than forty years later, Onan still shows visitors the dried banana, preserved through the unseen energy coursing through the Gold Pyramid House.

Soon after its completion he installed a lightning rod at its apex. He was surprised and annoyed the next day to observe that the rod was completely bent over. Cursing its poor quality, he immediately replaced it with another rod made by a different manufacturer. Within twenty-four hours it too was bent over.

All subsequent attempts to top his pyramid with lightning rods, no matter how well made or professionally installed, met with the same result. Onan eventually gave up his attempts to thus equip his home, which has since stood at the center of numerous electrical storms, some of them very ferocious. Not once has the Gold Pyramid been struck by lightning in the forty-four years of its existence. During the late 1970s one of Onan's sons, a normal lad in all respects, lived on the ground floor directly over the spring of freshwater beneath the house. Shortly after setting up his room there, the boy was overcome with an inexplicable urge to perform bodybuilding exercises. Claiming that the barbells with which he worked daily were substantially lighter inside the Gold Pyramid than anywhere else, he went on to win several national weightlifting championships.

Indeed, the place does seem to exert unusual influences on human behavior. Some years ago I was fortunate enough to be an overnight guest at the Gold Pyramid House. In its living room I experienced a deep sense of inner calm, as did many other visitors, but nothing more. I did, however, have a precognitive dream about the Gold Pyramid House. The vivid psychodrama featured a small aircraft that narrowly missed colliding with the structure to crash on the street just outside the main gate. Later that same month a private pilot, while sightseeing over the Gold Pyramid, lost control of his single-engine plane and crashed on the street out front, just as foreshadowed in the dream.

But humans are not the only creatures apparently affected by the Gold Pyramid House. Strange animal events are also known to have occurred there. For two summers running, beginning in 1986, hundreds of jellyfish suddenly appeared in the moat, *an impossible event in the Midwest,* according to experts at Chicago's renowned Shedd Aquarium. As suddenly as they arrived, the creatures vanished and never returned. No similar occurrence has ever been reported in Illinois, or anywhere else. The Pyramid House has been home to other bizarre animal phenomena.

Families of vicious birds roost above its eaves outside the north exit of the Chariot Room, which is no longer usable because the birds boldly swoop to

attack anyone approaching its glass doors. Coincidentally, the Chariot Room contains the faithful replica of Pharaoh Tutankhamun's coffin lid, its golden side panels illustrating his judgment and spiritual apotheosis. In ancient Egyptian religion the king's resting place was guarded at its northern end, the Pathway of the Soul, by Sokar, a bird that attacked anyone seeking entry to the royal burial chamber.

An ancient arcane principle states that the faithful re-creation of a sacred object or place infuses some energy of the original into the duplicate. This explanation accounts for the sacred power, say, of even a cheap, plastic crucifix, which nonetheless resonates with at least something of the power of the Cross it is meant to simulate. The same principle appears to be at work at Illinois's Gold Pyramid House, whose faithful if downsized reproduction of the Great Pyramid has attracted to itself a portion of the mysterious power still in evidence at Egypt's Giza Plateau.

The singular creation of another man arose some two hundred miles west from the Gold Pyramid House, in northwestern Iowa. Sprawling more than a city block is a series of nine handmade alcoves. With an estimated value in excess of $3 million, the complex comprises the largest grotto and most extensive mosaic ever created. Hundreds of thousands of precious and semiprecious stones have all been bonded by a specially cured, erosion-proof cement to form colossal columns, archways, niches, and shrines. One grotto, the Bethlehem Cave, is made of sixty-five tons of petrified wood. The combined weight of the entire complex is so prodigious that solid iron foundations needed to be sunk twenty feet into the ground to support it.

The Grotto of the Redemption was constructed with stones from every state in the union and from every region of the globe. There is alexandrite from the emerald mines of Russia's Takiwaya River, and purple amethyst from the Andes Mountains of South America; green jade from China and dark blue lapis lazuli from Egypt. There is even a specimen brought back from Admiral Byrd's expedition to the South Pole. Agates were cut and polished in Brussels, but the vast collections of quartz crystals came from all over the Earth. Everywhere there is a glittering profusion of orange coral, yellow jasper, pitch-black onyx, golden zircon, sea-green turquoise, deep purple sapphires, fiery rubies and bloodstones, pale moonstones, green malachite, rich amber—more than the eye and mind can take in during the course of a single visit.

Although the grotto is a monument portraying the biblical Fall of Man and his redemption through Christ, the brilliant variety of its costly materials and the peculiar shapes determined by their mineralogical character give the whole

complex an almost Asian appearance. It changes mood during daylight hours, sparkling after dawn, ablaze with rainbow colors at noon, and dimly glowing at dusk. Artificially lit after sundown by a dozen large spotlights atop sixty-five-foot poles, the grotto resembles some impossibly gigantic jewel set against the black velvet of the night sky.

Figure 23.2. View of Lower Arcade: Small Stations of the Cross at the Grotto of the Redemption. Photograph by MissouriRichardson.

Throughout the site are many superbly sculpted statues, all of white Carrara marble from the Apennine Mountains in Italy, imported at a cost more than $100,000. The most outstanding piece is a faithful re-creation of Michelangelo's *PietÃ* set atop a forty-foot-high hill of minerals. Close by is an artificial lake where white swans glide through the grotto's reflected image. Walking distance away is St. Peter and Paul's Church. The Christmas chapel inside contains a single Brazilian amethyst weighing over three hundred pounds. The twenty-two-foot-high maplewood altar was hand carved for the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, when it won first prize in an international carpentry competition.

As though the Grotto of the Redemption was not impressive enough in itself,

the story of its creation is even more amazing. It is the conception and work of one man, Paul Dobberstein, a physically slight man from Germany who arrived in the United States to study for the Catholic priesthood. Father Louis Greving, who much later became Dobberstein's helper and took over construction of the grotto, relates how the young seminarian became critically ill with pneumonia.

"As he fought for his life," Greving stated, "he prayed to the Blessed Virgin to intercede for him. He promised to build a shrine in her honor if he lived. The illness passed, the student completed his studies, and, after his ordination, he came to West Bend [Iowa] as a pastor, in 1898. For over a decade, he was stockpiling rocks and precious stones. The actual work of building the grottoes began in 1912. Before 1947, all the work of the grottoes was by hand labor; that is, the cement, mortar, rocks, steel, and precious stones were moved to the building site and placed on the building platform or scaffolds by bucket and wheelbarrow.

"Only in 1947, when perhaps eighty percent of the gigantic project was completed was an electric hoist installed to make the work lighter for the ailing artist. Most architects and contractors would hesitate a long time before undertaking a project such as the Grotto of the Redemption. It is doubtful whether it can or ever will be duplicated. The sheer bulk of the achievement is startling when we consider that most of the manual labor was done by two men, and practically all the artistic endeavor was done by Father Dobberstein single-handed."[1]

No less remarkable, Dobberstein resorted to no architect's plans, no blueprints or sketches, no paperwork of any kind to construct the grottoes. The vast project, from its conception after the turn of the twentieth century until the man's death in 1954, was carried entirely in his imagination. Nor was his work completed. For the next forty years Father Greving continued to expand it, adding more precious stones. All the materials—minerals, labor, and equipment—were donated over the decades by numerous persons inspired by Dobberstein's vision and achievement.

He suffered many personal hardships in its construction, including several serious accidents, once when scaffolding on which he was standing collapsed. His hands were often bloody with the work he felt compelled to complete before he died. The priest's final resting place is in the parish cemetery overlooking the monument he engineered.

The grotto is a powerful sacred site because of the sacred will and high spiritual intention that went into its creation. For those who appreciate the

esoteric qualities of the stone Dobberstein chose, the location's capacity for physical or emotional appeal is great. Each year about 100,000 visitors pass through the Grotto of the Redemption.

Another modern American re-creation likewise demonstrates the ancient principle of sympathetic magic: Tennessee's Parthenon. The architects, Ictinus and Callicrates, who built the Greek original in 439 B.C.E., never dreamed it would come to be regarded as the most beautiful structure ever raised by man. The white marble temple is an epitome of the so-called Doric order, the simplest and most refined of the Hellenistic systems of proportion and decoration. Its twenty-five fluted columns support a low triangular pediment of relief sculpture at the east and west ends depicting the Olympian gods and goddesses.

The interior comprised a walled rectangular chamber, the *cella*, which contained one of Western civilization's greatest treasures, the Athena Parthenos, a thirty-eight-foot tall statue of Athena the Virgin, after whom the building was named; literally, Hall of the Virgin. Made of gold and ivory, the colossus portrayed her standing erect in battle gear holding a diminutive goddess, Nike (Victory), in her hand. Light admitted through an eastern doorway and reflected off the gold ceiling was the single source of interior illumination for the 101-foot-wide by 228-foot-long structure.

The Parthenon remained intact for eight hundred years until Christians transformed the pagan temple into a fifth-century church. The new owners tore down the huge chryselephantine statue of Athena and sold off its pieces of ivory and gold. Later, Islamic Turks trashed its installed Christian paraphernalia, replacing them with their own, including a minaret in the southwest corner.

In their battles for Greece with the Venetians, the besieged Moslems used the cella as a powder magazine. During the course of one bombardment it received a direct hit, destroying the center of the building. Further degradations occurred when an English nobleman bought most of the surviving sculpture from the obliging Turks. Other sales went to French and Danish connoisseurs. Today, the battered, raped Parthenon still stands essentially intact—at any rate, its basic structure exists.

Its Nashville counterpart is a re-creation of the Parthenon in its original condition, complete with restored and duplicated statuary. One of the few concessions to modernity is the use of concrete. The employment of marble on so grand a scale would have been impossibly expensive. The Tennessee replica was completed for the 1897 Centennial Exhibition, celebrating Nashville's reputation as the Athens of the South. The brick, wooden lathe-and-plaster

temple survived the exhibition because of popular demand.

By the 1920s, however, the structure was crumbling badly. So a ten-year restoration project was proposed by the city park board. Reopened to the public in 1931, it attracted more than ten thousand visitors from forty-six states and a dozen foreign countries during the first month of its new lease on life. More than fifty years later, a twenty-month renovation upgraded the site to its present level. But the restorers' crowning achievement was unveiled in May 1990 with sculptor Alan LeQuire's plaster statue of Athena (see here).

Portals at either end of the temple frame the largest set of matching bronze doors on Earth. The Greek originals were so heavy, mule teams were needed to open and close them. The Nashville Parthenon's doors weigh 721 tons each and are decorated identically to those found in the Athenian original. Visitors enter at the east end and should not miss the gift shop, or the three galleries of original American art on the lower level. Outstanding is the Parthenon's permanent Cowan Collection, featuring the works of Albert Bierstadt, William Merritt Chase, and Winslow Homer.

Figure 23.3. Nashville's Parthenon. Photograph by Jud McCranie.

The Tennessee Parthenon is not a substitute for the original. It is instead the other missing half of the Parthenon experience. Those fortunate enough to visit the Greek Acropolis will feel their perception of this renowned sacred site completed after having seen the temple in its pristine condition. Although the

Nashville Parthenon is a modern replica consciously unconsecrated to any supernal concept, it is nonetheless a rapidly developing sacred center through the influences of sympathetic magic. This term refers to the transference of spirit power from its first source to another location resonating with the same or closely similar theurgic vibrations of the original.

Perhaps the most apparent instance of sympathetic magic generally encountered in the Parthenon is a kindred presence experienced here, as at the Greek source. Some ascribe this uncanny, respectful feeling to our human responses to the gods, and cite as an example the hushed tones into which most visitors naturally seem to fall when confronted by the Athena colossus. Others believe our genetic memory is at least partially reactivated in the presence of the Nashville simulacrum, as the image of the great temple that epitomized our spiritual instincts for centuries.

Whatever the cause, America's Parthenon is certainly pervaded with the milieu and feel of a genuinely magical place. Interestingly, the hill in Nashville's Centennial Park on which the modern Parthenon stands was already a sacred center long before construction began in the late nineteenth century. The Tennessee replica occupies a unique position on the 475-mile-long series of interconnected trails and waterways linking the Cumberland and Mississippi Rivers. Known as the Natchez Trace, it was traveled by Spanish explorers, tribal Indians, earlier Mound Builders, and even more enigmatic culture bearers over three thousand years ago, more than two millennia before the original Parthenon was raised in classical Greece.

Numerous ancient structures—mounds and earthworks—line the trace, at the northern terminus of which is located the Nashville Parthenon. Coeval with Athena's warlike protection of civilization, it was at the hill that later became the site of her re-created temple that General Andrew Jackson rallied his army for one of the most politically significant (if militarily untimely) victories in American history, the 1812 Battle of New Orleans, which frustrated British ambitions to reconquer America—although it was fought after the peace treaty was signed. Forty years later the same hill was a focal point of the Northern armies during the American Civil War.

In 1897 it was named part of Centennial Park, commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of Tennessee's constitution. So it would appear that the Parthenon and its colossus of Athena are but the latest additions in a developing sacred center consecrated to the humanizing forces of civilization. Before actually going inside the temple, tourists can climb the broad staircase to the upper level and stand in front of the towering bronze portals decorated with

mythic themes. Some claim to have experienced feelings of expectation, as though the fifteen tons of doors were about to slowly swing open at the touch of an Olympian hand.

For these perceptive visitors, a walk down the peristyle face across the west entrance and back up the south side completes a ritual circuit of the sacred center and sublimely prepares them for the greater inner experience of the Parthenon. They enter at the east end, ascending a short flight of stairs to the cella. There stands the impressive representation of Athena Parthenos poised magnificently under soft natural light streaming into her holy precinct from the 150-foot-high ceiling. At nearly forty-two feet tall, it is the largest piece of indoor sculpture in the Western world. The spear Athena supports with her left arm is thirty-six feet long. She stands on a five-foot-high marble pedestal decorated with golden panels depicting the immortal Olympians present at Athena's birth. Surrounding her, beyond the cella columns, are casts made of the original Parthenon sculptures of gods and goddesses. Even persons not spiritually inclined feel compelled to speak softly, as though out of reverence for the great living power that resides here. Behind her shield at her left side coils a huge serpent, a multisymbolic device signifying the Pelasgian, or Sea People, origins of the Greeks, together with the spirit of regeneration as implied in the snake's ability to slough off its old, dead skin for a new one.

In her right hand is Nike, the little goddess of winged victory. The white marble base is surrounded by gilt panels depicting Greeks and Amazons in combat. Other relief sculpture reproduced and surrounding the cella represent battles between men and centaurs, and the *Titanomachy*, a primeval war in which the Olympian gods overthrew the Old World order of the giants. All these portrayed conflicts demonstrate the victory of order and creative intelligence over chaos and ignorance.

The Amazons characterized unbalanced female energy, just as the centaurs stood for baser masculine passions, while the giants were identified with the forces of brutality. Athena personified the civilized triumph of harmony, self-mastery, and reason. Standing before her much larger-than-life image we realize that she is the potential for triumph within ourselves. With her own hand she literally offers us victory over all our imperfections that undermine happiness.

Figure 23.4. The largest indoor sculpture in the Western world is Alan LeQuire's re-creation of the lost original Athena Parthenos statue.

Photograph by Dean Dixon.

Walking around the Athena Parthenos to the western section behind the cella, visitors will find casts of original sculpted reliefs from the Greek Parthenon representing the birth of Athena in the company of all the Olympians and her contest with Poseidon, the sea god, for possession of Athens. This contest signifies the triumph of the conscious mind over subconscious chaos. Authentic Hellenic vases, executed in all the colorful grace, adroit liveliness, and skill for which they are prized, are also on display.

Illinois's Gold Pyramid House, Iowa's Grotto of the Redemption, and Tennessee's Parthenon exemplify the sympathetic magic that connects our time with the past through the numinous power of a shared spiritual relationship. And when we visit these modern sacred sites, we partake, at least partially, of the mysterious energies that went into their creation.

24

The Inscrutable Mysteries of Coral Castle

In 1993 I went searching for Florida's—and perhaps the world's—most bizarre place. I had seen the strange complex known as Coral Castle on a television documentary, and my curiosity was aroused. Because I was already in Florida for a book convention, I decided to combine business with investigation. I drove south on Highway 1 toward Homestead, where Coral Castle is located. The town is better known as the focal point for Hurricane Andrew, one of the worst tropical storms in U.S. history. Even though this natural catastrophe had occurred a full two years before, dramatic evidence of its impact was still visible from the highway.

On the way, through Princeton, Naranja, and Leisure City, there were lingering reminders of the disaster. The shell of what used to be a bank stood beside a roped-off supermarket, its roof buckling under the impossible burden of an upside-down semitrailer truck. Block after block, private homes, mostly little brick bungalows, were individually smashed almost beyond recognition as though by some giant's hammer. No structure stood undamaged. Numerous heaps of unidentifiable rubble shoveled together by relief workers were all that remained of many buildings.

Mile after mile, south Florida resembled an atomic bomb testing site. The devastation increased the closer to Homestead I got. I assumed Coral Castle had been badly damaged by the storm, if not obliterated. Homestead had taken the brunt of Hurricane Andrew's fury. Although violent desolation lay at the castle's very gates, the peculiar site stood intact, the only structure untouched by the swirling carnage. But what is Coral Castle, and how could it have defied a cataclysm that devastated everything around it for hundreds of square miles? The fortress-like complex is constructed of massive coral blocks, many of which exceed five tons. These are imaginatively arranged and fit together to form a central courtyard surrounded entirely by dominating walls.

Entrance is made through a gate fashioned from a single coral block weighing nine tons. This miraculous monolith is approximately eighty inches wide, ninety-two inches tall, and twenty-one inches thick. It fits within a quarter of an inch of the walls on either side and pivots through an iron rod resting on an automobile gear. The enormous block balances so perfectly on its center of gravity that a visitor can easily push it open with one finger. Modern construction engineers are at a loss to explain how such a ponderous object could have been set with such a high level of precision.

Another gate, this one a great triangle, at the opposite wall, weighs three tons. Inside the courtyard, to the visitor's immediate right rears a broad, square tower with a flight of stone steps ascending to a single doorway near the top. They lead to the highest point in the area and a small room. This chamber is occupied only by a leather hammock and a crude wooden table piled with primitive tools—chains, saws, many kinds of drills, wedges, hammers, chisels, and crowbars. Tools also festoon the walls. This imposing tower was raised with approximately 240 tons of coral cut into cyclopean blocks weighing from four to nine tons each.

The roof alone is comprised of thirty one-ton blocks neatly fitted together. Although modern electricity and plumbing are absent, oil lamps and a well of fresh water serve the living quarters—a sleeping chamber with twin beds, an outdoor cookery, and a bathroom. Usually overlooked by visitors is a low but massive altar comprising two coral blocks set against the south wall. To what god or gods it was dedicated, no one knows. Through a single window looking out over the courtyard below, the extent of this peculiar place can be perceived in a glance. Among its oddities is a scattering of oversize chairs made of coral, each one weighing a half ton. Although they look extremely uncomfortable, the chairs are, in fact, exceptionally restful and balanced into perfect rockers.

Remarkably, not a single tool mark has been found on any of them. Many chairs resemble contour lounges oriented to the sun after dawn and at noon. But they are not the only Coral Castle features with celestial orientations. Strolling through the castle I noticed numerous stone representations of planets, moons, and suns, many—perhaps all—deliberately aligned with various sky phenomena, as were the twenty-five huge chairs carefully positioned throughout the precinct. The site appears to be some kind of celestial observatory dating back to a time before the invention of the telescope.

Figure 24.1. Coral Castle overflows with celestial imagery. Photograph by Christina Rutz.

Twenty feet outside the wall stands the Great Pelorus—a lensless, telescopic structure, twenty-five feet tall and weighing twenty tons. Crosshairs inside its aperture resemble those in a bombsight, and they are aligned with Polaris, the North Star.

Figure 24.2. Coral Castle's Great Pelorus. Photograph by Frank

Joseph.

Nearby is a massive sundial calibrated to noon of the winter solstice, December 21, and the summer solstice, June 21. The sundial is adjacent to a fountain adorned with representations of the moon in its first and last quarters and when full. On the north wall are sculpted images of Saturn and Mars. The latter is shown next to a palmetto plant, signifying the artist's belief that life exists on the Red Planet. Other astronomical depictions and alignments abound throughout Coral Castle.

The castle's astronomical identity is subtly reinforced throughout the site. For example, a feature referred to by guides as the bird bath comprises three concentric circles 124 inches, 62 inches, and 18 inches in diameter, respectively. These measurements represent the solar system. The concentric rings correspond to the three major divisions of planets. The innermost group includes Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars. Jupiter, Saturn, and Uranus make up the middle group, and Neptune and Pluto are represented by the outermost circle. An appreciation of the extraordinary labor that went into building it may be gained by inspecting this same north wall.

The center section, surmounted by the representation of a crown, is the site's heaviest single block at thirty tons. Almost as massive is a forty-foot obelisk set in a hole six feet deep. In addition, Coral Castle has a two-and-one-half-ton banquet table surrounded by half-ton rocking chairs. The stone chairs are so perfectly balanced that they continue rocking long after a light touch has set them in motion. But Coral Castle was not built by stone-dragging slaves of an ancient civilization.

No less incredible than its own stupendous construction is the fact that the entire complex was built between 1920 and 1940 by and for one man working alone and in secret. His name was Edward Leedskalnin. He was born in 1887 into a farming family at Stramereens Pogosta, a small village near Riga, Latvia, but emigrated to North America before the outbreak of World War One.

While working in a Canadian lumber camp Leedskalnin contracted tuberculosis and fled to the warmer climate of Florida. With his puny savings, he purchased an acre of land near then-obscure Florida City for twelve dollars. Here he began building the first structures of the castle. At five feet tall, weighing one hundred pounds, and in uncertain health, Leedskalnin would be an unlikely candidate to quarry and move the tons of coral that even a robust man would have found impossible to budge. And his fourth-grade education hardly qualified

him as a construction engineer. His tools were handmade saws, chisels, chains, hoists, and hammers of the most primitive kind, and his only mode of transportation was an ancient, dilapidated bicycle without tires.

Leedskalnin was a fanatic for secrecy and worked only after sundown, when he was certain no one was watching him. If anyone did stop by to inquire how he was getting along, he would immediately stop working and chat pleasantly with visitors until they left, when he would resume construction. When we consider that he cut, moved, and positioned all of the structure's megalithic blocks in the dead of night, the man's achievement assumes a truly incredible scale. Some teenagers spying on him one evening claimed they saw him "float coral blocks through the air like hydrogen balloons," but no one took them seriously.[1] If their testimony can be believed, they were the only witnesses to the construction of Coral Castle.

In 1936, when developers threatened to set up a subdivision near Florida City, Leedskalnin bought ten acres in nearby Homestead with money saved through years of performing odd jobs for neighboring farmers. He dismantled the largely finished castle and transferred it block by block to the new location. Each piece was placed on a pair of iron girders mounted on a makeshift truck chassis and transported over ten miles to Homestead. For this major operation he relied on outside help for the first and last time. He hired a tractor but insisted that its driver not be present whenever the blocks were placed on his truck. The driver showed up at 9:00 every morning, and returned in late afternoon to find the chassis loaded with coral monoliths.

Once, the driver absentmindedly returned after less than half an hour for a lunch pail he had forgotten on the seat of the tractor. He was astounded to see several multiton stones already laid neatly on the girders. "It was impossible to have stacked those gigantic blocks in under thirty minutes," he recalled, "even with a steam-powered derrick. And Ed had no equipment, just a simple tackle and chain hoist. Yet, there they were, piled like cord wood."[2] Their mysterious mover was nowhere in sight, and the driver, somewhat apprehensive, left before Leedskalnin returned.

Relocating Coral Castle progressed with an easy haste. Leedskalnin accomplished this amazing engineering feat in less than a month and re-erected his stone complex, working under cover of darkness all through the night until dawn. It took him four years of unrelieved labor, during which time he added walls eight feet high and four feet wide at the base, with an average thickness of three feet. These forbidding ramparts weigh at least six and one-half tons. After

Coral Castle was completed, Leedskalnin opened it to restricted tours, charging twenty-five cents per visitor, but he preferred to live behind the great walls in seclusion.

He never shared the secret of its construction with anyone, saying only that he had rediscovered the laws of weight, measurement, and leverage used by the Ancient Egyptians, and that these lost principles somehow involved the relationship of the Earth to certain positions of the heavenly bodies. Leedskalnin is quoted as saying, “I have discovered the secrets of the pyramids. I have found out how the Egyptians and the ancient builders in Peru, Yucatán, and Asia, with only primitive tools, raised and set in place blocks of stone weighing many tons.”[3]

The very stones of Coral Castle support his story—at an average of six tons, they are twice the weight of the blocks in Egypt’s Great Pyramid at Giza. Carrol A. Lake, a colonel in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, stated that “Leedskalnin proved for all the world to see today that he knew the construction secrets of the ancients.”[4] He was seconded by one of America’s leading investigators, Vincent H. Gaddis, who said of the mysterious Latvian immigrant, “There is no doubt that he applied some principle in weight lifting that remains a secret today.”[5]

Even the purpose of Coral Castle was deliberately obscured. When asked why he assumed such an enormous undertaking, Leedskalnin smilingly explained that it was built entirely for his Sweet Sixteen, Agnes Scuffs, a woman he once asked to wed but who never left Latvia, where she married even before he arrived in Florida. Revealingly, he never contacted Agnes after coming to America. He seems to have used this tale to politely put off unwanted curiosity.

Little is actually known about Leedskalnin, a friendly though private person. His dedicated isolation once got him into trouble, however, when he was beaten by a gang of local yahoos who threatened to kill him if he did not divulge the location of what they believed was a treasure hidden inside Coral Castle. He suffered their savagery and told them nothing.

After his death, $3,500 was found in the tower—his life savings, mostly from land sales—but that was all. Leedskalnin’s work was his life. Material pleasures meant nothing to him, and he merrily subsisted on a diet of sardines, crackers, eggs, and milk. His meager garden produced green vegetables and some fruits, and he trapped the occasional rabbit. He worked tirelessly from sunset to sunrise and spent much of his day reading from his library about magnetic current and cosmic forces, resting only a few hours in the late

afternoon.

Edward Leedskalnin passed away in his sleep during 1953 of malnutrition and kidney failure. His only living relative, Harry, inherited what was then known as Rock Gate Park. Shortly before he died, Harry sold the property to a Chicago family, who gave it its present name. Thirty years later Coral Castle was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Nearly seven decades later, Leedskalnin's marvelous home is still explored each year by thousands of visitors from across the country and around the world.

Coral Castle has attracted the international attention of professional construction engineers, astounded and mystified by the apparently impossible achievement of this diminutive wonder worker. In the mid-1970s, for example, a large bulldozer was hired to manipulate a coral block equivalent to the Castle's thirty-ton monolith; the bulldozer could not even lift it. Alternative science investigators suggest that Leedskalnin somehow learned the secret of the World Grid, an invisible pattern of energy lines surrounding the Earth that concentrates points of telluric power where they intersect. It was here, at one of these intersections of Earth energy, that he was supposedly able to move his prodigious stone blocks using the unseen power of our planet.

Researcher Ray Stoner suggests that Leedskalnin moved the Castle not because it was threatened by an encroaching subdivision but because a surveying error misplaced the site ten miles from an Earth-energy vortex or focal point. In order for the structures to maximize this energy the entire complex needed to be relocated in Homestead, where the telluric forces were focused.[6]

Investigator Bruce Cathe writes, "the site of Coral Castle is mathematically related to the world energy grid, as are the other remarkable structures which, however, date from ancient times. Ed Leedskalnin had not moved on to the Florida site by chance. This geometric position was extremely close to one that would be ideal for setting up harmonics related to gravity and light harmonics. The fact that [he] had access to secret knowledge is much more evident in the relationship of Coral Castle to the world energy grid system."[7]

Stoner argues that "some fundamental conditions must be met before a structure like Coral Castle can be made to function as intended. It must be exactly situated over an energy vortex, aligned with a celestial event or events sufficiently precise to predict their recurrence, constructed in a specific shape, and built with certain materials. Finally, activities at the site may be successfully undertaken only at the moment the celestial events to which it is oriented take place."[8]

Stoner's prerequisites for particular shapes and building materials are reminiscent of experiments in pyramid power in the mid-1970s, when the precise angles (variants of 15.2 degrees) of the pyramid and its special construction elements (crystalline granite and nonconducting limestone) determined their success. Author James Wyckoff writes, "The ancient Egyptians knew that the shape and angle of pyramids contained a mystical energy force."[9]

Traditions from various parts of the ancient world describe levitation as the construction means used by the unknown builders of miraculous structures. In Britain, Merlin was said to have originally found Stonehenge in Ireland, where, like Leedskalnin, he single-handedly took apart its massive stones and transported them through the air to England's Salisbury Plain. A world away in distance and time, the South Pacific islanders of Ponape still tell how the twenty-ton basalt columns of Nan Madol, an enormous megalithic site, were floated across the sky by two Merlin-like magicians. Recalling the teenagers' report of multiton blocks floating through the air, it may be easier to believe that Leedskalnin was using Earth energies after all.

Cathe suggests that "at certain positions on the globe there are localities where the forces of gravity can be manipulated by the application of certain geometric harmonies. Where these geometric conditions exist, it is evidently possible for people who have the knowledge to use gravitational forces to construct great buildings of massive material. Stonehenge, the ancient pyramids, the temple at Baalbek, and perhaps the pyramids in Central and South America were the results of a combination of knowledge and gravitational anomalies. Coral Castle, I believe, occupies one of these positions."[10]

But how Leedskalnin built Coral Castle is no more mystifying than why he did it. He had little interest in money, consistently resisting efforts by entrepreneurs to advertise his place and turn it into a tourist attraction. Indeed, outsiders could gain entrance only after pulling on a bell cord, to which he may or may not have been in the mood to respond. He rarely left the site, and what he did behind its sheltering walls no one ever knew.

Like the enigmas of its construction, its real function is unknown. Why did he make so many sculpted references and astronomical orientations to the heavens? For whom were twenty-five, half-ton rocking chairs designed? To what or whom was his barbaric altar dedicated? What need could have demanded so massive a complex as Coral Castle? And why did Edward Leedskalnin devote his whole life to it? Today, Coral Castle is open to the public as the self-made monument of a reclusive man's mysterious genius.

SECTION V

Extraordinary Personalities

26

Jules Verne, the Clairvoyant Author

The name Jules Verne is synonymous with visionary science fiction. He described atomic-powered submarines, a trip to the moon, helicopters, television, and other twentieth-century technologies a hundred years before they came to pass. Verne's books were published to international popularity that continues today, and he still reigns supreme as France's most translated author. Surprisingly, however, Verne's most far-sighted novel was rejected by publishers in 1863—at the height of his career. Pierre Jules Hetzel, whose company published a sixty-four-volume series of Verne's work, returned the manuscript for *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, saying, "No one today will believe your prophecy."[1]

It portrayed life in the City of Light specifically during the 1960s, and differed radically from the author's imaginative fantasies in which he optimistically lauded technological evolution as the beneficent wave of the future. In his rejected novel Verne reversed himself by depicting the society to come as degraded by uncontrolled development and spiritual disorientation. In Verne's future Paris, popular culture has sunk to juvenile levels, with a general obsession for electromechanical gimmicks that are mere toys for transient self-gratification and triviality among the masses.

Figure 26.1. Jules Verne in 1878

After its rejection the manuscript disappeared. In 1989 Verne's great-grandson, while in the process of selling the family home, found a large safe. The safe's bronze door had to be cut open with a blow torch. The perfectly preserved, handwritten pages of *Paris in the Twentieth Century* lay inside under a pile of linen. Its publication 131 years after Hetzel's rejection caused a global

stir when the novel was translated into dozens of languages. Readers were intrigued by the nineteenth-century writer's amazing descriptions of fax machines, automobiles, elevators, and so many other technological innovations that have become part of our daily lives.

But even Verne's knowledgeable fans were disturbed by his biting characterization of the vulgar materialism he saw as the end result of rampant technology. It seemed he had suddenly switched over from technophile to technophobe. Some reviewers compared the novel with the later classics *Brave New World* and *1984*. According to early twenty-first-century English editors of *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, "Its predictions are much closer to the truth. It is astounding how accurately Verne managed to predict our contemporary world."[2] Verne's future Paris is a megalopolis that teems with a confusion of self-propelled vehicles and includes twenty-four-hour convenience stores, an elaborate subway system, and ear-shattering concerts of "electronic music."[3]

A typical condominium is "an enormous structure in wonderfully bad taste, sporting a multitude of plate glass windows, a veritable barracks transformed into a private residence, not so much imposing as ponderous."[4] The schools of the future—which Verne equates to academic credit unions—contain classrooms where information is dispensed through modern audiovisual equipment. Businesses use fax machines to communicate with far-flung branch stores. There is an electronic bank alarm, "an apparatus of virginal sensitivity," with which "electric lights are automatically turned on."[5]

There are even personal computers: "Operating by a sort of keyboard, sums are instantaneously produced, remainders, products, quotients, rules of proportion, calculations of amortization and of interest compounded for infinite periods and at all possible rates."[6] Verne also foreshadows two hotly contested aspects of today's legal system. Writing sixty-five years before the invention of the electric chair, he describes how in twentieth-century Paris, "criminals were now executed by an electric charge."[7]

He also predicts how he thought plea bargaining would come to dominate the system: "Lawyers no longer plead, they compromise; a good transaction is preferred to a good trial; it's faster and more profitable."[8] He deplored what he envisioned as a general decline in literacy: "Classical authors and the entire book trade in Sallust and Livy peacefully crumbled to dust on the shelves of the old publishing house; but introductions to mathematics, textbooks on civil engineering, mechanics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, courses in commerce, finance, industrial arts and whatever concerned the market tendencies of the day

sold millions of copies."[9]

In Verne's futuristic Paris, not only literature but all the arts are dying through neglect. While Gioachino Rossini, of *Guillaume Tell* (William Tell) fame, still maintains a place in the repertoire, Giacomo Meyerbeer, composer of *Les Huguenots* (The Huguenots), has been, as Verne accurately portrayed him, almost totally "forgotten." So are Louis Herold and Daniel Françoise Auber, the founders of grand opera. Their kind of music is replaced by the hysterical ravings of sounds as discordant as they are stentorian: "Yes, an electric concert, and what instruments!"—all of them wired together to generate the loudest possible noise for the broadest commercial success.[10]

But there are sadder consequences than cultural sterility in Verne's twentieth-century Paris, including social disintegration and technology's calamitous impact on the natural environment. Verne argues that the transient material gains cannot compensate for the resulting social and personal losses. If a future dominated by relentless traffic, anonymous architecture, and supermachines must be purchased with culture-less wealth, broken families, and a polluted environment, he writes, then humanity has been catastrophically shortchanged.

Skeptics argue that Verne's prophetic novels about our century were possible only because he was a keen observer of scientific developments in his own time, trends he followed to their logical end in a hypothetical, though credible, future. While rooted in the technology of his day, the accuracy of Verne's predictions went far beyond anything his contemporaries could invent—so much so that paranormal abilities cannot be ruled out of his fiction. It seems clear that Verne did indeed peer into our time. Perhaps he saw more about ourselves than we are willing to recognize.

29

The World-Shattering Secret of Sir Francis Bacon

Although I thought I was familiar with the grounds of the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul, I was unaware of any Columbus statue alleged to be there. But then I approached a small group of people gathered in rapt attention around the pedestal of a generally overlooked monument on the east lawn. I guess those are the folks I'm supposed to interview, I thought, and interrupted their apparent reverie by announcing, "I'm looking for Fletcher Richman."

The three men and five women made way for a spritely fifty-two-year-old man sporting a Stars-and-Stripes tie and a winning smile. He was the historical consultant of the group styling itself "Sir Francis Bacon's Sages of the Seventh Seal," of which I knew nothing, save that he and his colleagues—some from as far away as England—had gathered at the state capitol for some arcane purpose. Richman attempted to enlighten me as we walked around the base of the bronze statue in the bright May sunshine.

The information discussed in this chapter is based on a May 1996 interview with Fletcher Richman.

"Throughout the ages, men and women have been anointed with the sacred task of preserving, protecting, and often 'hiding in plain sight' original documents of ancient wisdom, historical archives, and the treasures of the advanced civilizations of centuries long passed," he began.

"In order that future generations may benefit once more from these remarkable evidences of human achievement, they utilized intricate coding and ciphering systems. These brilliant messages of the past laid a pathway of discovery for those individuals and small groups who were sensitive and

receptive to an inner prompting to begin this unique journey of discovery. Through diligent purification of the human being, extraordinary dedication of study and practice, and the willingness to persevere in spite of obstacles and challenges to the contrary, great strides have been made in the twentieth, and now twenty-first century, to once again reveal the locations and contents of many of these sacred vaults in America and throughout the world. Each capital city has at least one such treasure trove, and St. Paul, Minnesota, is no exception."

Richman called my attention to the left hand of the larger-than-life-size statue of Christopher Columbus. "Notice it is pointing to a specific spot about fifteen feet south of the monument. That is where one of the vaults has been buried about twenty feet beneath the capitol lawn. Soon, we hope to meet with [Minnesota] Governor Pawlenty for permission to rope off this area and go over it with ground-penetration radar, which should verify that one of the brick chambers is indeed where we claim it is. Once its existence has been thus confirmed, we will file an application with the Governor's Office to excavate it."

The vault's subterranean location was apparently known to the sculptor and Italian government authorities that donated the statue and erected it in 1931. A few feet farther south of the vault's suspected whereabouts is the likewise unmarked site of Saint Paul's first white settler. Like the statue's maker, she was Greek, a not inconsequential coincidence to Richman, who argues that Columbus himself, contrary to mainstream opinion, was actually born Prince Nikolaos Ypisilantis. As a late-fifteenth-century student he traveled from his home in Chiosas, Greece, to Genoa, where he received a classical education, went on to become an accomplished navigator, and was initiated into the rites of one of the numerous secret societies that flourished throughout Italy during the Renaissance.

Sixty-nine years after Columbus discovered America another initiate was born in York Place, England. Conceived by the inappropriately entitled Virgin Queen, Elizabeth I, and Robert Dudley, the infant was packed off to grow up under surrogate parents, Sir Nicholas and Lady Bacon. The lad's exceptional intellect soon manifested itself, as Francis Bacon was early recognized as something of a boy genius in school. Not until late adolescence, however, did he learn the shocking truth about his royal origins, a revelation that immediately preceded his exile to France by a suspicious queen.

According to Richman, "in the grandeur of the French court, young Francis, at the age of eighteen, gathered with other philosophers and metaphysicians, among them Rosicrucians, Knights Templar students, and Theosophists. Under

his leadership, they formed a movement of Freemasons, who were dedicated to recording the true history of their age, the contents of their work secured in copper cylinders, then placed in brick vaults and buried carefully in the earth for future generations to locate, excavate, read, study, and apply such knowledge for the upliftment of the human spirit and condition worldwide."

But far more than history books was allegedly buried in the brick vaults. Bacon and his associates supposedly worked out an ideal form of world government diametrically opposed to the monarchy of Queen Elizabeth—hence the need for secrecy. The principles of this democratic doctrine were clearly spelled out for use in some future period when Bacon's radical ideas would find greater acceptance than during the sixteenth century. He concocted these subversive concepts with his friends after his return to England after a three-year absence.

"These brilliant men and women, known as his 'Good Pen,'" Richman explained, "included such luminaries as Christopher Marlowe, Ben Johnson, Edmund Spenser, Sir Tobie Matthew, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Drake, Lancelot Andrews, and Sir Thomas Meautys. Keenly aware of the dangers of publishing under their own names, the Good Pens hid their true identities under the greatest nom de plume in history: William Shakespeare. The true meaning of this unique name is 'The Will of the I AM will shake the spear of wisdom.'" Bacon and his illustrious friends cloaked their politically incorrect intentions in the worship of the Greek goddess Pallas Athena, said to "shake the spear of wisdom of truth."

Figure 29.1. Sir Francis Bacon

Richman went on to point out, “There was a pretender, poacher, horse

handler, and minor actor during the time of England's 'Divine Awakening,' but the spelling of his name was 'William Shagspur.' He was known to be illiterate, with a serious drinking problem, and could have never been the true author of such beautiful, classic plays and sonnets during his lifetime."

These famous works were written by the Good Pens, most particularly Sir Francis Bacon. They "paid this man [Shagspur] to be their 'muse,' using him as a cover for their true identities." According to Richman and his colleagues, Sir Francis additionally edited the King James version of the Bible in 1611, although his original rendition was altered by ecclesiastical authorities alarmed at Bacon's egalitarian sentiments, which they expunged.

In the midst of growing political oppression Bacon faked his own death in 1626, thus enabling him to carry on his work of enlightenment under another form of concealment. About this time members of the Good Pens sailed for the New World with their manuscripts, biblical translations, and political treatises—together with hordes of jewels, gold, and silver. Bacon did not follow them, but a relative, Nathaniel Bacon Sr., the acting governor of the Jamestown colony, was said to have interred the priceless collections under its first brick church. Fifty years later all these items were relocated to the Bruton Parish Churchyard, in Williamsburg, Virginia, in thirty-three copper cylinders buried twenty feet deep in a ten-by-ten-foot brick cube.

"Included within the Bruton Vault," says Richman, "is physical evidence for the true lineage of the English monarchy, the original Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, the lost writings of Shakespeare (actually, Sir Francis Bacon), the original King James version of the Bible as edited by Bacon, the exact location of all other vaults belonging to the legacy of colonists, pioneers, explorers, conquistadors, and individuals who were anointed with the sacred vision of true Christianity. The wealth contained within these sacred vaults is to be used to prepare, educate, and relocate the masses of humanity before, during, and after massive changes of the Earth during these latter days, and to rebuild communities after the settling of the aftermath."

Richman and his fellow researchers believe the combined contents of the vaults have the potential to stop the current Iraqi conflict, which they say is a prelude to World War Three, the biblical Armageddon. In addition to these treasures the vaults are also said to contain either unpublished chapters from or a sequel to Bacon's most famous published book, *The New Atlantis,* a utopian vision of world peace and prosperity, together with a master plan for bringing mankind into global harmony and order. Writer Tedi Trindle concluded in the three-part *Return of the Vault People* that this story "is as mysterious and

convoluted as the human brain."[1]

Indeed, the tale becomes more fantastic the further it unravels. Some enthusiasts are convinced CIA operatives are suppressing all public information about the vault in the name of national security. These true believers suspect the CIA is using a Nazi-built time machine enabling agents to travel back and forth into the past and future, gathering intelligence and predicting the reincarnation of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene, who threaten to disclose the secrets of the vault. Extremist opinion also places the lost secret of alchemy—the transmutation of base metals into gold—and the power of immortal life in the Bruton vault.

While skeptics may shake their heads at what must seem to them a self-deluding fantasy, Sir Francis Bacon himself contributed to the controversy in one of his last written statements, recorded, significantly enough, at the Bruton Parish vault site, in 1676: "I have held up the light in the obscurity of philosophy, which will be seen centuries after I am dead. It will be seen amidst the erection of tombs, theatres, foundations, temples, of orders and fraternities for nobility and obedience; the establishment of good laws as an example to the world.

"For I am not raising a capitol or a pyramid to the pride of men, but laying a foundation in the human understanding for a holy temple after the model of the world. I shall not then doubt the happy issue of my undertakings in this design, whereby concealed treasure, which now seems utterly lost to mankind, shall be confined to so universal a piety, and brought into use by the industry of converted scholars whose wretched, opinionated books have impartial laws, or shall have dedicated as an untimely feast to the worms of Earth in whose tomb these deserted riches must ever lie buried as lost abortments, unless those be made the active midwives to deliver them."[2]

Yet another famous name has been drawn into the Baconian enigma, the occult writer of the early twentieth century, Manly Palmer Hall. Born March 18, 1901, in Peterborough, Ontario, Hall grew up to establish the Philosophical Research Society, which still hosts a wide range of lectures, seminars, workshops, and performances on philosophical subjects. Located in Los Feliz, California, since it first opened its doors in 1934, it was designated a Cultural Site by the Los Angeles City Council eleven years ago. During his long life Hall rose to the highest rank possible in the Scottish Rite by becoming an honorary 33rd-degree Mason, a privilege bestowed on such renowned personalities as Norman Vincent Peale and Senator J. Strom Thurmond.

Hall, too, was sure that Sir Francis Bacon was the real author of the so-called Shakespeare plays, but had better cause than most other investigators for reaching such a conclusion. In *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, he explained, "The philosophic ideals promulgated throughout the Shakespearean plays distinctly demonstrate their author to have been thoroughly familiar with certain doctrines and tenets peculiar to Rosicrucianism; in fact the profundity of the Shakespearean productions stamps their creator as one of the *Illuminati* of the ages. Most of those seeking a solution for the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy have been intellectuals. Notwithstanding their scholarly attainments, they have overlooked the important part played by transcendentalism in the philosophic achievements of the ages. The mysteries of super-physics are inexplicable to the materialist, whose training does not equip him to estimate the extent of their ramifications and complexities. Yet who but a Platonist, a cabbalist, or a Pythagorean could have written *The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, or *The Tragedy of Cymbeline*? Who but one deeply versed in Paracelsian lore could have conceived *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?"[3]

Thanks to Hall and his wife, Marie, "the challenging task of deciphering intricate cipher codes upon the tombstones at Bruton Parish Church has been, for the most part, completed," Richman says. "Diligently, with exacting precision, patience, inspired deciphering techniques, and months of metaphysical research, Marie and her friends were able to locate, for the first time since 1676, the original foundations of the first brick church in the middle of the cemetery in the churchyard at Bruton Parish."

Figure 29.2. Skull and bones at the Bruton vaults. Photograph by Sarah Stierch.

But that was about all she was able to find during the course of two digs beginning in 1938. In neither excavation was the alleged vault unearthed. As testimony to the enduring nature of the Bruton controversy, attempts were again made in 1988 and 1992, when a geologist took twenty core samples at a depth of as many feet. He found no evidence of any human presence in the churchyard. Since then local authorities have forbidden any further archaeological work, professional or otherwise, in their cemetery, and posted signs in clear language to that effect for would-be discoverers.

"It's a pity," said Richman, who believes the vault lies under a pyramid-shaped structure in Bruton graveyard known as the Bray monument: "Beneath it is a spiral staircase that goes down to a Freemasonry library." Undeterred by these reversals, the ten men and women who comprise today's Sir Francis Bacon's Sages of the Seventh Seal are not discouraged. They have pursued their goal for the past twenty-two years and studied directly under the Halls at their Los Angeles home.

Before Manly passed away in 1990 he and Marie presented Richman and his associates with maps, cipher code translations, and their personal library—materials that have proved invaluable for their ongoing search for the 144 brick vaults buried around North America. Excavating and opening these underground repositories of Baconian wealth and wisdom, they believe, will usher in a new age of enlightened civilization and sustain mankind through the catastrophic Earth changes just ahead.

The time for the rediscovery and disclosure of the brick vaults has come, Richman says, despite the low number of his following. "Through the centuries, individuals and small groups have been anointed with the consecrated task of holding these truths and locations in silence until Providence initiated the permission for their release." Thus motivated, the quest for the lost wisdom of Sir Francis Bacon goes on.

30

The Mad Count of Alternative Archaeology

If there was ever a real-life “Indiana Jones,” his name was Count Byron de Prorok, an early-twentieth-century Hungarian and naturalized British citizen who repeatedly endangered his life and the lives of everyone around him in search of ancient mysteries. World famous for his exploits during the interwar years, he is today almost totally forgotten, save by a few unconventional investigators who treasure his rare, long out-of-print titles.

Unavailable for more than sixty-five years, De Prorok’s *In Quest of Lost Worlds* is witty, fast-paced, luminously descriptive at times, and delightfully incorrect—politically, that is.

“Gsell’s room was thick with tobacco smoke, mostly his. Through the flood of his volcanic exhaust I saw him move to an old book on his shelf. ‘I am an explorer in slippers,’ he said. ‘No, I cannot make this expedition. I am not so sure that I approve of all this digging, all this discovery, this bringing to light of new material which alters much of what I have written and more of what I still have to write.’”[1]

De Prorok, a university-trained scholar working for the French government and a member of the archaeological establishment, was an outspoken believer in the sunken civilization of Atlantis, a viewpoint that would today have him unceremoniously tossed out headfirst from the tallest ivory tower. Shows you how things have changed.

Figure 30.1. Count de Prorok

“Absolve me from any daydreams of Atlantis,” he pleads insincerely,

“although I have consciously and unconsciously searched for the lost continent for years. I am not alone in the search.” His quest took him into the most forbidding Mexican jungles, where he found an extremely primitive tribe on the verge of extinction huddled in their last generations among the crumbling remains of a splendid stone temple he speculated might have been built millennia ago by Atlantean refugees from the catastrophe that obliterated their overseas kingdom.

De Prorok’s Yucatán experience is one of the great adventure yarns, the highlight of which takes place when a native boatman throws him into an alligator-infested river. Similarly nail-biting incidents punctuate description of some fabulous discoveries, since shelved by official archaeology most likely because of the man’s interest in Atlantis. He nonetheless found a huge, megalithic city in central Algeria, naturally shunned today by excavators for that land’s political chaos, and the tomb of Tin Hinan, the “legendary” Queen of the Tuaregs, ancient rulers of North Africa, in the A’Haggar Range of the Sahara Desert.

His expeditions conclude with an unsuccessful search for King Solomon’s mines in the mythical Land of Ophir that he thought might have been in Ethiopia. In the process he provides firsthand insights into an Ethiopia on the verge of being conquered by Mussolini’s army but with tantalizing, unmistakable roots in the Old Testament.

De Prorok was the first archaeologist to use motor caravans, motion picture cameras, spotter aircraft, and aerial photography, yet he is never so credited in modern archaeology texts. De Prorok is maverick archaeologist, high adventurer, and great writer—all of them rarities these days.

SECTION VI

Altered States and the Afterlife

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Death, the Great Mystery of Life

The title of Herbie Brennan's book is not as facetious as its title may seem to some readers. In *Death: The Great Mystery of Life* the Irish author provides an insight as obvious as it is enlightening for those of us caught up in the daily distractions that prevent a true evaluation of life and the men and women with whom we share it. He cites the Toltecs, an eminently civilized people who followed the Maya and preceded the Aztecs in their rule of pre-Columbian Mexico. They believed that Death is the Great Teacher.[1]

What could they have possibly meant by this statement? They recognized the plain fact that everyone must eventually die. Persons in the Western world do not like to think about dying and prefer to imagine that our inescapable demise can be almost indefinitely put off through medical treatment, healthy diet, and exercise, but according to the Toltecs, this is the wrong way to look at death. Instead, they thought of death as not only inevitable, but imminent. We survive from heartbeat to heartbeat, from breath to breath.

You could be dead from a variety of causes before you finish reading this chapter. Rather than be depressed by such a consideration, there is a reversal of our fear of death, developing into a deep appreciation of existence. If our doctor informs us we have only one week of life left, we typically respond with a series of natural reactions. These usually include, in order of progression, shock, denial, sadness, anger, resignation. But the Toltecs knew an alternative. They did not wait for someone to tell them they were going to die. They already knew that. In assuming they could expire at any moment, they estimated their lives accordingly.

When faced with impending death we may choose to go through the standard routine. Or we might "embrace the horror" as an opportunity to concentrate on the things that mean the most to us, those personal values from which we have been distracted by the daily demands of trying to survive and prosper in modern society. If we knew we were about to pass away in a few

days, our relationships with all those persons we love and with people in general would intensify and deepen. Time would suddenly become the most precious commodity, and we would use every moment of it to relish in the appreciation of life, especially nature's usually overlooked details.

Flowers and sunsets would take on a dramatically expanded significance. This is what the Toltecs meant when they claimed Death as the Great Teacher. The same recognition permeates Tibetan Buddhism, whose leader, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, has often been quoted to the effect that his whole life is spent in preparation for death. Far from any apparent morbidity, his attitude of compassion for all fellow beings is conditioned by coming death, which will someday sweep him from the world: "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may! Old Time is still a-flying, and this same flower that smiles today tomorrow will be dying."[2]

SECTION VII

Numinous Nature

AFTERWORD

Powerful Parallels

Collecting thirty-one of the world's outstanding "power places" in this single volume not only discovers new insights into these proverbial "sacred sites" but more surprisingly discloses hitherto unseen patterns and unsuspected themes connecting one to another. Such revelations are all the more astonishing in light of the often immense time discrepancies and oceanic barriers separating so many curious locations.

These seemingly inexplicable, certainly unexpected commonalities appear less circumstantial than comprehensible within the context of immemorial human nature as it strives to touch the subtler spiritual dynamics underpinning and driving the world of external appearances. How else, for example, can we explain the similarly mystical phenomena associated with the Nile Delta's Great Pyramid—the supreme masterpiece of a lost race that flourished fifty centuries ago—and James Onan's downsized replica outside Chicago, Illinois, erected less than half a century ago?

This question was convincingly answered by Edward Leedskalnin, when he described how, as the architect of Coral Castle, he assembled Florida's strangest complex after discovering paranormal construction techniques employed by pharaoh's architects, who anciently accessed the same arcane energies that inspired both himself and Onan.

That monumental pyramids independently came into being throughout the premodern world and among disparate peoples unknown to each other is alone remarkable in the extreme. How was it possible such a singular, geometrically challenging design was not only repeated among cultures as wildly differing from one another as Asian, Mesoamerican, and Near Eastern civilizations but that their geographically separated, though often contemporaneous pyramids shared identical features and functions? Is it merely coincidental, as chapters 1 and 2 point out, that the prehistoric ground plan of the Ohio Valley's Mound City precisely matches the base dimensions of the Nile Valley's Great Pyramid,

which itself shares the same construction date with the Mississippi Valley's pyramidal Monks Mound?

Then there are the Great Serpent Mounds of Scotland, Kansas, and yet again, Ohio, together with the anthropomorphic effigy earthworks of giants on identically oriented hillsides in southern Wisconsin and southern England. What are we to make of these intriguing comparisons?

Pre-Columbian contacts, as much as archetypal human response to spiritual and/or telluric energies, are no less discounted by mainstream scholars, who can, however, offer no plausible explanations. But just such unconventional possibilities suggest themselves in power places like the Classical World's foremost oracle at Delphi near the south coast of Greece, and its modern world counterpart at Medugorje in Croatia, where deification of the Eternal Feminine was similarly personified by a sibylline Queen of Heaven. At the much older sacred site she spoke through the Pythia, a psychically sensitive woman intuitive, whose late-fifteenth-century C.E. British compeer was chapter 27's Mother Shipton.

All these and many more compelling analogies begin, perhaps for the first time, to clearly inflect and reflect on each other in the foregoing pages. Our parallels expose themselves as related phenomena, either by way of self-evident, pre-Columbian cultural contacts—however much decried by blinkered archaeologists—or through the impetus of human nature.

As such, the extraordinary locations cited here, together with their no less extraordinary men and women—Power Places and the Master Builders of Antiquity—continue to live in the perennial gift of their eternal legacy. It connects us still with the world's numinous energies and those within ourselves, so long as we continue to recognize and access them. Therein lies the higher purpose of this book.

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About the Author

Frank Joseph was the editor in chief of Ancient American magazine from 1993 until 2007. He is the author of several books, including *Before Atlantis* and *Advanced Civilizations of Prehistoric America*. He lives in the Upper Mississippi Valley.